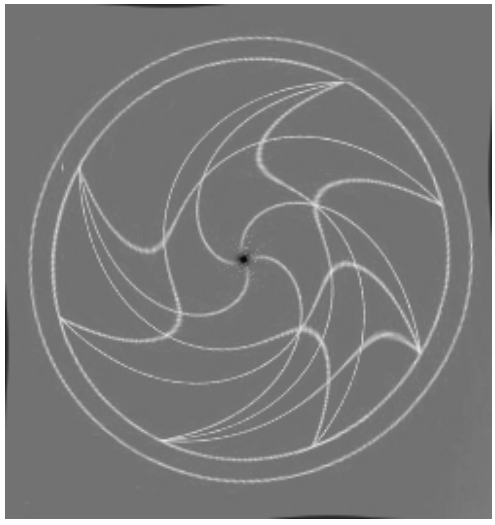
MYTHOS:

TALES OF SINISTER INFLUENCE AND DARK GODS



DEDICATED IN THE YEAR 119 FAYEN
TO THE MENTORS, MASTERS AND MONSTERS:

THE O9A

"Mythos" is a secular compilation released in hardcover by The Black Glyph Society in association with the Temple of THEM Australia in dedication to the Order of Nine Angles and its Dark Mythos.

The Texts comprising "Mythos: Tales of Sinister Influence and Dark Gods" are facsimiles of Manuscripts [MSS] written by the ONA and circulated via its unofficial electronic site 'Wordpress ONA' c.e. 2008 / 119 Fayen. "Mythos" is illustrated by a symbiosis of original ONA artwork and images contributed by artists of THEM.

The Temple of THEM represents an independent tendril of Sinister Initiates devoted to sustaining the Works and Mythos of the ONA via its own living nexion and members of THEM were or are involved in living the Seven-Fold Way. However, its representations and reproductions of ONA Works should not be confused as belonging to members of - or in any way associated with - the ONA Proper.

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THE MYTHOS OF THE DARK GODS: BEINGS OF ACAUSAL DARKNESS

According to the Sinister Tradition of the ONA, The Dark Gods (a.k.a The Dark Ones) are specific entities - living-beings of a particular acausal species - who exist in the realms of the acausal, with some of these entities having been presenced, via various nexions, on Earth in our distant past. These beings are shapeshifters, and can assume a variety of living causal forms, in the realms of the causal, including human form. The fictional stories *Sabirah*, and *Jenyah*, deal with one type of such acausal beings who have assumed human form - describing their need for the acausal energy (the "life-force"), possessed by humans, in order to sustain and maintain their shapeshifting causal form. The aural Sinister Tradition of the ONA holds that both Baphomet (the female entity as described by the ONA) and Satan are memories of, and manifestations of, two particular acausal beings, two particular Dark Gods.

By the nature of the acausal (see Note 1), such acausal entities are - viewed from our own limited and mortal causal perspective - "formless", ageless and eternal, although if and when they venture forth into the causal dimensions, their living-there, the causal form they adopt, are subject to causal change. Hence, for example, their need to return to the acausal, or to regularly find some source of acausal energy (in the causal).

However, aside from these specific entities known to us, or esoterically remembered by some of us, as the Dark Gods species, there are other acausal entities, other acausal living-beings, other acausal species, who and which have been manifest in our causal Space and causal Time, or who and which can become or may become manifest in our causal Space and causal Time, many of whom are not shapeshifters, and many of whom cannot exist, for long (in terms of causal Time) in our causal Space and causal Time.

In addition, there are some entities who and which only live, exist, in those twilight realms, those strange dark worlds, where the causal and the acausal intersect or meet - that is, in the nexions which manifest such intersections, and thus the flow of

acausal energy into the causal. There is an aural Sinister Tradition that what have been incorrectly termed "demons" are some of these acausal entities existing, or which have existed, in those twilight realms where causal and acausal intersect.

To understand, and appreciate, The Dark Gods - and all acausal entities, including those dwelling in the twilight realms where causal and acausal meet or merge - one has to understand the true nature of nexions, of those "gates" or openings or "tunnels" where there is, or can be, either a flow of acausal energy (and thus acausal entities) from the acausal into our causal Space and causal Time, or a journeying into the acausal itself.

The Nature of Nexions:

Basically, there are three main types of nexion. The first is an actual physical nexion - a place or region, in causal Space and causal Time, where there is a direct physical connexion to acausal Space and acausal Time; a particular place where our causal Universe is joined, or can be joined, with the acausal Universe. According to the Sinister Tradition of the ONA, there is a physical nexion in our Solar System, near the planet Saturn, as there are other physical nexions in our particular Galaxy, and elsewhere in the Cosmos.

The second type of nexion is a living causal being. That is, all living-beings, in our causal Time and causal Space, are nexions - they all possess, by virtue of being "alive" a certain acausal energy, the amount of which varies according to the type of life, with a human being considered to possess (by virtue of possessing consciousness) more acausal energy than the other life on this planet of ours. In addition, it is considered, by Adepts of the Sinister Tradition of the ONA, that most human beings possess the potential to expand the nexion that they are, with this expansion - this increase in our acausal energy - being one of the esoteric aims of genuine sinister magick.

All living causal nexions, however, are limited in causal Time. That is, they possess only a limited life-span, a limited causal duration, although some sinister Adepts have speculated that it is possible for an advanced practitioner of the Dark Arts to not only increase their life-span, through esoteric means, but also to "transcend" to the acausal itself: to become an acausal being who is ageless and eternal. This, however, is said to require not only a bringing forth from the acausal such entities as The Dark Gods, but also to "become one", to merge, with Them (or with one of Them) by either transferring consciousness to one of Them, or having Them create an acausal vessel/form for such consciousness.

The third type of nexion is a magickal creation: that is, some form in which acausal energy is presenced or "channelled into" by a sinister Adept, with this form being either already organically, physically, living, or which, through a sinister transformation, becomes living in the sense of being possessed of, and manifesting or channelling, acausal energy.

In the magickal sense, our consciousness, our psyche, is a region where causal and acausal meet, or rather, where they can and should meet and intersect, and it is one of the aims of genuine esoteric Orders, groups and Adepts, to guide Initiates into this realm, often through utilizing symbols and forms, such as the Tree of Wyrd and the associated "correspondences", which are guides, maps, of such a realm, and a means to access and develope acausal energies and thus transform ourselves into Adepts, and beyond.

Manifesting The Dark Ones:

One of the aims of the ONA is to presence The Dark Ones: to return, to our causal Space and our causal Time, The Dark Gods. To unleash these entities upon the world and so cause Chaos, and that Change and evolution which will result. Thus will the Old Order - a now ever-increasing tyrannical order - be destroyed, and thus would a New Aeon begin. Thus will there be a significant evolution of ourselves, as individuals.

Such is the nature of the Cosmos - of causal and acausal, of the "Cosmic seasons" - that every two thousand years or so the Cosmic spaces are aligned such that it is easier then to draw forth, into the causal, acausal energies. Traditionally, according to Aeonic Magick, these times mark the beginning of a New Aeon, and, currently, we are within a few centuries of such a change - and thus at a time when more and more acausal energy is available to us, if we know how to access and presence such energy.

Such energy - and the living-beings of the acausal - can be presenced in several ways. First, by various rituals, such as those associated with the Nine Angles, where a specific "named" (see Note 2) entity may be called forth, or where unformed (unformed, at least, as discernible to us) acausal energy is/are accessed and released into the causal.

Another way is preparing a suitable living-receptacle (which may be a host human being or a collection of such beings) and then presencing, via ritual or other esoteric means, the acausal energies (or being, named or unnamed, or both) into such a host or hosts. That is - in one sense - making such hosts available to such entities, should They choose to accept and inhabit and use such hosts, possibly only on a temporary basis until They have found their own or have acquired sufficient energy to be able to sustain themselves, as shapeshifters, in the causal.

A Mythos of Times Past:

The aural Sinister Tradition of the ONA mentions that, at the dawn of our consciousness as human beings, some of The Dark Ones came forth to Earth through a physical nexion, which nexion most probably existed on this planet, Earth. There has been much speculation about, and some legends regarding, the location of this

physical nexion - which, if it exists as tradition asserts, would be viable again now or soon, given the Cosmic cycle we are currently in.

There has also been speculation about, and some aural legends regarding, how long these dark acausal entities stayed, in our causal Time and Space, and much speculation regarding why they left, with one aural legend asserting that a few of them have, as shapeshifters, survived and hidden themselves among us, feeding, waiting for the stars to be aligned aright again and for sinister Adepts to bring forth their kin.

Anton Long

ONA, Year of Fayen 119

Notes:

(1) Acausal: The *acausal* is used, as a word, to refer to what, correctly, is that Universe which may be described, or re-presented, by acausal Space and acausal Time.

This acausal Universe is part of the Cosmos, which Cosmos consists of both the acausal and the causal, where "causal" refers to the Universe that is described, or re-presented, by causal Space and causal Time.

(2) Names of The Dark Gods: The names which we "know", as recorded in the Sinister Tradition of the ONA, are those which have been transmitted to us aurally: a memory (perhaps corrupted or only half-remembered) from an ancient causal time, when some such entities were once presenced on this Earth.

However, the given "name" only “re-presents” (that is, names) a particular acausal being when it is chanted (or vibrated) in a particular way under suitable conditions, which often means in association with a certain crystal of a certain shape, which crystal and which shape enhance such chant or vibration.

A Note Concerning the Symbology of the Dark Gods

In discussing the received, aural, ONA traditions concerning The Dark Gods - as for example recorded in *Naos* where some names and some sigils are given - one has to understand five important things.

First, that the ONA Way is essentially practical, and it is emphasized again and again that it is practical experience which matters. Thus, in respect of such "names" and sigils and phrases, the starting point for the Initiate is to use them, magickally, in the way described and so experience what, if anything, results and how what is learned compares with the knowledge that has been transmitted. Thus, and for example, such practical experience will or can or might reveal to the Initiate why some pathways of the Tree of Wyrd are related to "named" remembered acausal entities, and why some are related to "phrases" or general terms (such as a "name" of an extra-terrestrial physical nexion or the constellation or star where such a nexion resides or is near to, or to where one would have to travel toward to get to that nexion (as seen from our planet, Earth).

Second, that there is a difference between calling-forth, presencing, a specific named acausal entity, and calling-forth, presencing "raw", unformed, acausal energy (that is, un-named, or of a name unknown to you, acausal being).

Third, that it is possible that some recorded names and sigils are in some way, minor or otherwise, corrupt, having been incorrectly remembered over the millennia.

Fourth, that The Dark Gods are only one species of acausal beings, known to us through aural tradition and through the practical sinister magick of many Adepts. Thus, one should ask: are the "named" entities referring to an acausal entity of this acausal species, or to another entity of another acausal species, or even to an entity from those twilight realms, those strange dark worlds, where the causal and the acausal intersect or meet?

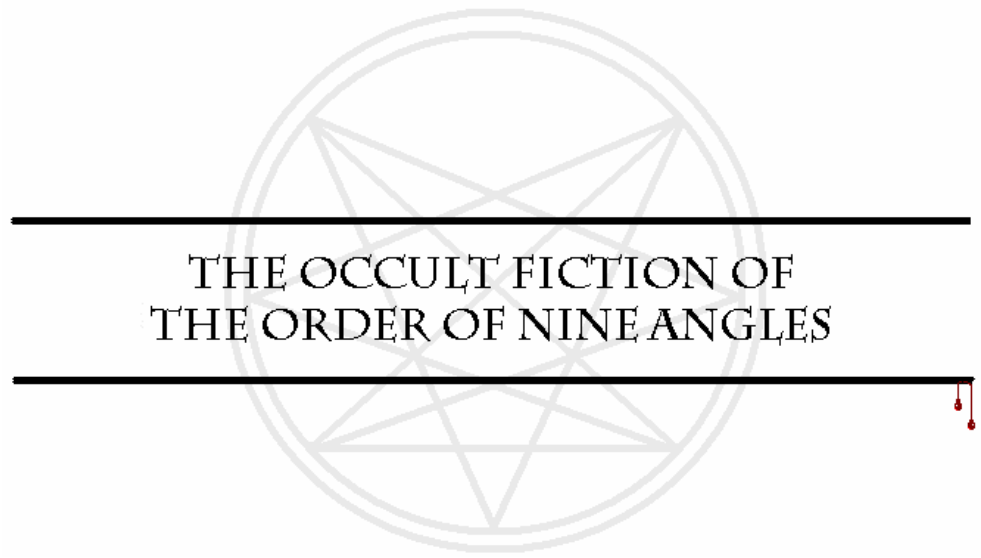
Fifth, that the Tree of Wyrd (and similar symbologies) are only and ever partial causal re-presentations and guides. They may be the best we have, representing the knowledge and wisdom of several millennia, but they are in themselves only a stage; only a path leading to what is beyond their symbology, which is an understanding, a knowing (based on experience) of what is so re-presented in such a causal manner. What is beyond, is both the intersection of causal and acausal, and the acausal itself - with its living-beings; its acausality of Space and Time, which acausality is far far beyond each and every symbology of ours.

Anton Long

119 Year of Fayen

Further Reading:

1) *The Mythos of the Dark Gods: Beings of Acausal Darkness*
2) *Advanced Introduction to The Dark Gods: Five-Dimensional Acausal Sorcery*
3) *Naos, Chapter 17: Dark Pathways*
4) *Naos, Pathworkings (Table I)*



Introduction:

The Occult fiction of the Order of Nine Angles comprises the following stories:

(1) *The Deofel Quartet*, consisting of the four texts *Falcifer, Temple of Satan*, *The Giving,* and *The Greyling Owl.*
(2) *Tales of the Dark Gods*, comprising the four short stories *In The Sky of Dreaming*, *Jenyah*, *Sabirah*, and *A Dark Trilogy*.
(3) *Breaking The Silence Down.*
(4) The two individual short stories *Hangster's Gate* and *Copula cum Daemone.*

The most recent works are those included in *Tales of the Dark Gods*, dating from the past few years, while the others date from the 1970's (e.n.) and the late 1980's (e.n.).

Several themes are common to most, if not all, of these stories - and this brief MS will briefly deal with two of the most interesting of these themes, from an Initiated Occult viewpoint. These are what may be called *The Mistress of Earth* archetype (the powerful, sinister, feminine principle), and the setting of the stories in the English county of Shropshire.

The Sinister Feminine Principle in the Works and Mythos of the ONA:

One of the most noticeable (and neglected) aspects of the ONA mythos is the predominance given to what may be termed the Sinister Feminine Principle, evident, for example, in what the ONA calls the rôle, and Magickal Grade, of Mistress of Earth, and in its depiction of, and homage to, the Dark Goddess Baphomet, whom the ONA describe as one of the most powerful of The Dark Gods.

Thus, in the Occult fiction of the ONA, the main character - the main protagonist, the "hero" - is often a powerful, beautiful, woman, with ordinary men, more often than not, manipulated by, or somehow subservient to, these women who belong to or who identify with some ancient Sinister tradition, or the Left Hand Path, and Satanism, in general. For instance, in *The Giving* - which is probably the most forthright fictional portrayal, by the ONA, of a genuine Mistress of Earth - the heroine is Lianna: a wealthy, powerful, beautiful and mature woman, who is heiress of a sinister rural pagan tradition which involves human sacrifice. She is seen manipulating both Mallam and Thorold, and the story ends to leave the reader to answer the unanswered question as to whether she really contrived Monica's death and used her sinister charms to beguile - "to beshrew" - Thorold following that death.

Quite often, in these stories, the Dark Goddess Baphomet is invoked directly - as for example in *The Temple of Satan*, and *In The Sky of Dreaming*. In the latter, we are left to speculate as to whether the always un-named alien female shapeshifter who returns to Earth is actually Baphomet herself, and there are several clues, scattered throughout the text, which might be used to answer this question. In other stories - such as *Jenyah* and *Sabirah* - we are presented with sinister, vampiric-like, entities who have assumed female form (or who have always had a female form in our causal world) and who have dwelt on Earth for millennia, using the "life-force" of human male victims to sustain themselves, and who can easily be regarded as "dark daughters of Baphomet". All of these women are mysterious, enchanting - and physically powerful: for instance, the woman described in *Sabirah* easily overpowers the young men who attempt to molest her.

In general, such depictions - and the mythos of the ONA in general - may be said to empower women; to depict them in a way that has been long neglected, especially in the still male-dominated, materialistic, West. However, this empowerment, it should be noted, is based upon "the sinister": upon there being hidden esoteric, pagan, depths, abilities and qualities in women who have an important, and indeed vital, rôle to play in our general evolution and in our own lives. Furthermore, it is one of the stated aims of the ONA to develope such character, such qualities, such Occult abilities, in women, and the following of The Seven-Fold Sinister Way is regarded as the means to achieve this

Furthermore, the ONA's depiction of such women - its explication of the dark feminine principle - is very interesting because it is a move away from, and indeed in stark contrast to, the "feminine principle" of both the political "feminism" which has become rather prevalent in Western societies, and that particular feminine ethos which many pagan and Wiccan "White-light" and Right Hand Path groups have attempted to manufacture.

This political feminism is basically an attempt to have women imitate the behaviour, the personality, the ethos, of men - which is what the strident calls for "equality" are essentially about, and as such it is often a negation of the character, and of those unique qualities and abilities, germane to women. The pagan and Wiccan type of feminism is most often about some dreamy, pseudo-mystical vision of a once

mythical "perfect past" or about goody-goody types "harming none" - in stark contrast to the dark sinister goings-on of the ONA feminine archetype, which most obviously includes using sexual enchantment to manipulate those Homo Hubris type men "who deserve what they get…"

One of the central themes of the ONA's *Breaking The Silence Down* is the nature of the dark goddess "manifest in or who can become manifest in women", and there are many references, in ONA works, to a dark sorceress being one of the essential keys to "opening the nexion that allows The Dark Gods to return to Earth…"

Dark Shropshire Themes:

The still largely rural English county of Shropshire is the setting for many of the Occult stories of the ONA. *The Giving*, *Breaking The Silence Down*, *Jenyah, Sabirah, Copula cum Daemone*, and *Hangster's Gate* are all located in Shropshire.

The reason seems obvious, given the ONA's account of its own history, which is that this area was where its traditions survived into our modern era, handed down by a few mostly reclusive individuals, and where a few small groups of rural followers of that ancient sinister way met to conduct their pagan rites. A glimpse of one such group is given in *Hangsters Gate*, while *Breaking The Silence Down* tells of hereditary knowledge passed down from grandmother (or mother) to daughter, and *The Giving* presents an ancient pagan ritual, The Giving, which perhaps is the original folk form of the ONA's *The Ceremony of Recalling*.

Interestingly, *Hangster's Gate* and *Breaking The Silence Down* are set in the same area of Shropshire, a century or more apart, with some phrases of the later echoing some of those of the former, as if to suggest, to intimate, an hereditary link.

It should be noted that both *Jenyah* and *Sabirah* - dark stories of ageless female sinister entities ("demons") - are set in Shropshire, as if to suggest that such entities may still be lurking in such places as they frequent in those stories, if one knows where to look, and has the good fortune (or misfortune, depends on one's ethos) to encounter them.

A.M.
Lypehill Nexion
119 Year of Fayen

Appendix: A Note Regarding the Texts

All of the Occult fiction of the ONA is freely available on the Internet, with these versions being derived either from electronically scanned copies of photocopies of the original typescripts circulated (in very limited numbers) by the ONA in the mid-1990's (e.n.) or the result of some enthusiast having (sometimes using US English) wordprocessed copies of such typescripts or an already available Internet version.

This scanning, copying and recopying of the original typescripts (which themselves contained some typos) has resulted in numerous errors, omissions, and mistakes in the versions available on the Internet, and in the printed and downloadable books based on such Internet versions.

Such errors and mistakes are most obvious, for instance, in the story *Copula cum Daemone* (Copulating with Demons) - whose Latin phrases and words (deriving from Medieval and Ecclesiastical - not Classical- Latin) are for the most part corrupted through such copying.

Thus, the only genuine ONA versions are those original ONA typescripts (and direct photocopies or direct electronic images of them), which original typescripts were circulated by the ONA.

However, corrected, and revised, versions of various Internet texts have been issued, mostly by Anton Long. To date, corrected versions of all the texts of *The Deofel Quartet*, the text of *Breaking The Silence Down*, and of *Hangster's Gate*, have been issued.

A notable exception to corrupted texts is *Tales of The Dark Gods*, which was first issued by the ONA on the Internet, and is available in various formats, including pdf.

BAPHOMET:
VAMPERESS OF THE DARK GODS

[A Sigil of Baphomet]

According to the Dark Tradition of the Order of Nine Angles, Baphomet is a sinister acausal entity, and is depicted as a beautiful, mature, women, naked from the waist up, who holds in Her hand the bloodied severed head of a man.

Thus, She is the dark, violent, Goddess - the real Mistress of Earth - to whom human sacrifices were, and are, made and who ritualistically washes in a basin full of the blood of Her victims. According to aural legend, She - as one of The Dark Gods - is also a shapeshifter who has intruded ("visited", been presenced or manifest) on Earth in times past, and who can manifest again if certain rituals are performed and certain sacrifices made.

Traditionally, it was to Baphomet that Initiates and Adepts of the Dark Tradition dedicated their chosen, selected, victims when a human culling was undertaken, and such cullings were - and are - regarded as one of the prerequisites for attaining sinister Adeptship.

Associated with Baphomet, according to aural tradition and legend, are other dark, Sinister, female acausal entities - described in ONA fictional works such as *Jenyah*, and *Sabirah* - who have existed, hidden, on Earth for millennia, and who maintain

their causal, ageless, and secret, existence by feeding off the acausal life-force of their male human victims whom they entrap, and test, using sexual enchantment. These other entities are often described as *The Dark Daughters of Baphomet*, and they - like their Mistress, The Mother of Blood, Baphomet - are thus, in a quite literal sense, vampires. Aural tradition and legend further asserts that some, if not all, of these *Dark Daughters of Baphomet* are capable of not only, if they so wish it, bearing half-human offspring from selected human males, but also of rewarding chosen humans, both male and female, with an ageless existence either on Earth, or in the realms of the dark formless acausal itself.

Exoterically, Baphomet, and Her female kin and offspring, may be said to represent the vivifying fecund *Sinister Feminine Principle*. The dark, sinister, dangerous, beautiful, feminine, balance which is both purifying and necessary - if rather neglected by most other esoteric groups. Baphomet is often regarded as the Bride, The Mistress, of another of The Dark Gods, known to us by the exoteric name *Satan*, and sinister Rites, and sacrifices, to honour Baphomet were often held around the time of Autumn Equinox and associated with the star Arcturus and, for some special esoteric Rites, the star Dabih.

Further Reading (ONA MSS):

1) *Baphomet: A Note on The Name, Parts 1 and 2*

2) *The Sinister Feminine Principle in the Works and Mythos of the ONA* (in the MS *The Occult Fiction of The ONA*).

3) *The Ceremony of Recalling* (with Sacrificial Conclusion)

4) *Mythos of the Dark Gods*

5) *Synestry: A Sinister Ceremony*

Baphomet: A Note on the Name I

The name of Baphomet is regarded by Traditional Satanists as meaning "the mistress (or mother) of blood" - the Mistress who sometimes washes in the blood of her foes and whose hands are thereby stained. [See 'The Ceremony of Recalling'.]

The supposed derivation is from the Greek βαφη μητρα and not, as is sometimes said, from μητιος (the Attic form for 'wise'). Such a use of the term 'Mother'/Mistress was quite common in later Greek alchemical writings – for example Iamblichus in "De Mysteriis" used μητριζω to signify possessed by the mother of the gods. Later alchemical writings tended to use the prefix to signify a specific type of 'amalgam' (and some take this to be a metaphor for the amalgam of Sol with Luna, in the sexual sense).

In the Septenary System, Baphomet, as Mistress of Earth, is linked to the sixth sphere (Jupiter) and the star Deneb. She is thus in one sense a magickal "Earth Gate" (qv. the Nine Angles), and Her reflexion (or 'causal' nature - as against Her acausal or Sinister nature) is the third sphere (Venus) related to the star Antares. According to esoteric Tradition, the Antares aspect was celebrated by rites in Albion c.3,000 BP – in the middle and toward the end the month of May and some stone circles/sacred sites were said to be aligned for Antares. In contrast, the Sinister aspect of the Mistress (i.e. Baphomet) was celebrated in the Autumn and was linked to the rising of Arcturus, Arcturus itself being related to the Sinister male aspect (Mercury - second sphere), later identified with Lucifer/ Satan. Thus, the August celebration was a Sinister hierosgamos - the union of Baphomet with Her spouse (or 'Priest' who took on the role of the Sinister male aspect). According to Tradition, the Priest was sacrificed after the sexual union, where the role of Baphomet was assumed by the Priestess/Mistress of the cult. Thus, the May celebration was the (re-)birth of new energies (and the child of the Union). Tradition relates this Sinister, sacred Arcturian rite as taking place once every seventeen years. Once again, some sacred sites in Albion are said to be aligned to the rising of Arcturus, over three thousand years ago. In the middle ages, Baphomet came to be regarded as the Bride of Satan – and it is from this time that both 'Baphomet' and 'Satan', as names for the female and male aspect of the dark side came into use (at least in the secret sinister tradition).

Hence the Traditional depiction of Baphomet - a beautiful mature woman (often shown naked) holding up the severed head of the sacrificed priest (usually shown bearded).

To some extent the Templars revived part of this cult, but without any real esoteric understanding and for their own purposes. They adopted Baphomet as a type of female Yeshua, but with some bloody/ sinister aspects - and contrary to most accepted ideas, they were not especially 'Satanic'. Rather, they saw themselves as holy warriors, and became a military cult with bonds of honour, although their concept of "holy" differed somewhat from that of the church of the time, including as it did dark/Gnostic aspects. Their sacrifices were in battle and not part of a specific rite.

The image of Baphomet (e.g. by Levi) as a hermaphrodite figure are romantic confusions and/or distortions: essentially of the symbolic/real union of mistress and priest and his later sacrifice. The same applies to the derivation of the suffix of her name with 'wisdom' (and a male image at that!) - even the confused Gnostics understood 'wisdom' as female.

Baphomet: A Note on the Name II

There is a tradition regarding the origin of the name Baphomet which deserves recording, even though it is not regarded as authentic, having no present-day proponents.

This tradition regards the name as deriving from βουβαστις - the Greek name for the Egyptian goddess Bastet, recorded by Herodotus (2.137 ff). It is interesting that Herodotus identifies the goddess with Artemis, the goddess of the moon. Bubastis was regarded as the daughter of Osiris and Isis and often represented as a female with the head of a cat - cats were regarded as sacred to her. Artemis was a goddess unmoved by love and she was regarded as Apollo's twin sister (the identification of her as a 'moon goddess' followed naturally from this since Apollo was linked with the sun). Like Apollo, she often sent death and plagues, and was propitiated sometimes with sacrifices.

It is interesting that (a) βουβαστεια is the Pythagorean name for 'five' [qv. Iamblicus: Theologumena Arithmeticae, 31] - perhaps a link with the 'pentagram'?; (b) the Templars, with whom the name Baphomet is associated, were said to have worshipped their deity in the form of a cat.

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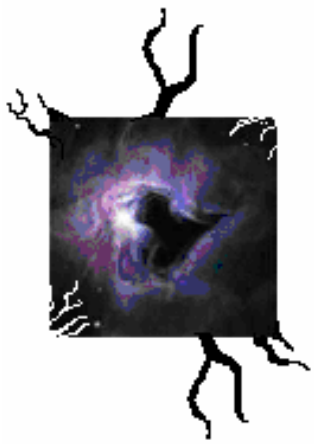
The tradition recorded above, and the one described in part I, both regard Baphomet as a female divinity - and both are esoteric traditions, hitherto unrecorded. It is possible that both are correct, that is, that the actual name Baphomet derives (as mentioned in part I) from the Greek βαφη μητρα: the prefix referring to being 'dyed/stained' or 'dipped' in blood. The suffix derives from 'mother' or 'mistress' used in a religious sense (qv. Iamblicus 'De Mysteriis'). This name - Baphomet - is thus a descriptive one for the "dark" (i.e lunar) goddess, to whom sacrifices were made, and which was actually known in former times as 'Bubastis' - that is, Bastet, to whom cats were sacred. Thus, Baphomet could be regarded as a form of Artemis/Bastet - a female divinity with a 'dark' side or nature (when viewed via conventional morality) to whom sacrifices have been, and continue to be, made. Sinister tradition regards Baphomet as the Bride of Satan/Lucifer - this would fit well since Lucifer is often regarded as a form of Apollo: Artemis is the female form ('sister') of Apollo. Here, it must be remembered that both Apollo and Artemis were not aetherial, moral and lofty divinities (the classical gods have been romantically misinterpreted) - they could be, and often were, deadly and dark: both 'sinister' and 'light'.



JENYAH

The warm Sun of middle-Spring warmed her as she walked down Broad Street in the county town of Ludlow to the entrance of the Feathers Hotel with its early seventeenth century timber façade. The oldness - the dark oak beams, the never-quite-straight walls, the sense of enclosing dimness - still pleased her, although the changes made during the decades of the last century did not, and she resisted the transformation that would have made the young man at Reception, in his shiny ill-fitting inexpensive suit, follow her unbidden to her room.

Instead, she kept her appearance, and the accent, of an attractive - but not too attractive - mature lady of the County set who probably owned a horse, or three, stabled somewhere in the grounds of her large country house, and the registration procedure lasted no more than a dull five minutes. He was too young, anyway,

unable to provide the diversion, the passion, and the acausal-energy, she needed, for already the faint trembling in her hands had begun: the first reminder of her enduring timeless need. And even as she walked up the stairs alone, carrying her small travel bag, she began to feel the centuries weighing down upon her, ageing her ever so slowly.

But she had planned well, as she always did, for there would be men, tonight, some eager - as they almost always were - for that thrill of a tryst in the long evenings following their meetings or conference or whatever it was that drew them away from their homes and their wives. A few lies; one betrayal - first, or one among many - it did not matter to them; for there was their pride, their lust, their still living animal nature. No evolution, upwards: except for those few whose wordless perceiving bade them walk away, or those few who though enticed still had strength enough to resist. No, no evolution, upwards - she knew, except for such few. And she smiled, remembering the delightful dreams she gave to those few.

So she prepared herself as she always prepared herself while she sat in her room alone, knowing that her long-serving servant would tidy her room and see to all formalities after her chosen task was complete. Thus did she prepare: her dress suited to the young woman she was, as were the shoes, and the make-up which she, with expert ease, applied to her face and which reflected the times which had changed this particular chosen and familiar Hotel. And when she was ready she descended the stairs to enter the recently refurbished Bar where gathered some of the already alcohol-soaked conference-attendees.

The room - with its low ceiling, its carved oaken-bar, its discreet lighting - did not particularly displease her, and she sat alone, in a plush wooden armchair, at a table in one corner, already noticed by several of the Bar-thronging men. Perhaps it was her esoteric perfume. Perhaps it was her short purple dress, which seemed to scintillate in the light and which clung to the voluptuous contours of her youthful body. Perhaps it was the way she walked in her stiletto shoes. Or the red lipstick upon her lips. Or her long red hair that fell around her shoulders. Whatever it was, it was not long before a man came to greet her.

His suit was not inexpensive, as his blond hair had only just begun to recede and - to any ordinary woman, perhaps - he would have appeared as not unattractive; a fairly prosperous youngish family man, making his way in the Corporate world.

"Hi, I'm James," he said, self-assuredly and by way of introduction as he stood by her table holding a flûte of champagne. "Can I get you something to drink?"

It was not the worst gambit she had heard, and she smiled at him. "Yes. A Tom Collins."

"Certainly!"

So he left to place her order to return to ask, ”May I join you?”

“Why yes! Are you here for the conference?”

“Hmm,” he muttered.

“You do not seem particularly enthusiastic.”

“I’m not. Bloody boring.”

“But necessary and required.”

“Unfortunately, yes.” He drained his glass, and signalled to the barman to bring him more. “May I ask your name?” he enquired as he sat looking at her nipples, which - erect - prominently impinged upon the thin material of her dress.

“Jenyah,” she breathed, softly, letting the scented warmth of her breath touch his face as she leaned toward him.

He smiled then, sure of his success, but began fumbling with his wedding ring.

“Perhaps,” she said, now knowing and having sensed enough, and as loud laughter from the three men standing at the Bar reached them, “it would be agreeable to you if we went back to my house?”

“Why, yes. Of course. Certainly!”

“My car is outside.”

“Splendid!”

So she led him out from the side entrance of that Hotel to where her car was parked among some others - elegant in its refined blackness and whose tall muscular chauffeur - her servant, his eyes hidden behind designer sunglasses - held open the rear door for her and her chosen companion of the evening. Thus were they conveyed in comfort on that long journey through the dark of the country night until they reached that steep hill of the narrow lane and her house above a valley.

He did not see much of its old-fashioned but clean and fastidiously tidy interior, and neither did he desire to, for his already intense sexual desire had been heightened by the luxury of her car and the wealth so obvious from her dwelling, and he willingly let himself be led along a narrow skein of corridors to a panelled room whose only light came from a burning, large, coal-fire. Even the oppressive heat nor her strength did not concern him as she roughly pushed him toward the large Oak bed to salaciously rip away his clothes and remove her own.

Her beauty of body - her voluptuousness, her sexuality - was everything he imagined, everything he desired, and her intoxicating scent seemed to increase until he was wrapped, cocooned, within it. She was upon him, then, holding him down, his arms outstretched and pinned to the silken covering of the bed by her hands wrapped around his wrists while she manoeuvred her body to place his erection inside her where he felt the warmth of her warm sensuous wetness. For what seemed a long long moment he experienced an intensity of joy, of physical pleasure, such as he had never known before, making him close his eyes in exultation as she moved upon him. But then - then as he arched his back again in sheer physical exultation and delight - intense pain followed by agony engulfed him and blood from his severed penis flowed out of her.

But she was laughing, laughing, still holding him down, overpowering him as he writhed in pain, until she moved to lick his bloody wound - cauterizing it with her strange oral fluid - to kiss him, and it was in that briefest of brief moments before he fainted - weak, and overcome with the shock of this, and of his seeing - that he saw not a young sensuous woman but something else, not quite human, draining away the acausal-energy of his life through her blood-soaked kiss.

She, satiated, left him then to the ministrations of her servant who effortlessly carried the limp and bloodied but just-living body down stone steps and along a short brick-lined dimly lit tunnel to an unlit cell whose thick and still sturdy iron door bars were pitted with the seeping rust of age. There was a bed, a bucket, a stained blanket - but nothing else - and it was here, amid the cold dank stifling blackness, that he would hours later awake, shivering, lying on the slimy cobbles of the floor, while she - freshly bathed and dressed - walked outside, smiling, happy, renewed, among the wind-speaking moonlit trees of her dark ancestral hill.

There, in that unlit cell, he would live, for a while, while his usefulness lasted. And it was there in the first of his many many days that he would cry out into the darkness for hours, until exhaustion overcame him. There did he languish, lamenting his stupid choices, his lies, his betrayal of his wife and family. There he would briefly vainly plead to God, to any god, deity, for release, and there he would eat and drink the little that was provided him, pushed through the bars of his door by her servant, as it was there - in that unlit blackness - he would hear, or thought he heard, the weak sighs, the cries, of another, until, one day or one night, the soft sighs, the soft distant muffled cries, came no more to torment him.

There he would close his eyes, sometimes, in sleep when what little strength remained failed him. And there: there were the nightmares, the pitiless nightmares of how she still enticing and scented would come upon him in the blackness to kiss him to suck from him the remaining drops of the life within. He would sleep then, peacefully - but only for a while, only for a while: longing after that short moment of rest never to awake, again.

The hot Sun of late Summer warmed her while she sat outside the trendy Café, waiting. Her chosen and familiar Hotel was nearby, and she would retire to it soon, as darkness descended upon the city. But, for now, she was content enough to let the warm Sun please her, as it almost always did as its healthy rays reached her youthful face, arms, hands and legs while she sat, fashionably if skimpily dressed, as were the other young women who passed, there on that evening in that city by the river whose water flowed, as her life, from one beginning to another: a precious gift, finding its own level, its own way, while bringing death to some.

Algar Merridge
March 119, Year of Fayen

***

SABIRAH

1

She could smell the rain even though it was still many many miles and hours distant, and - as the Sun descended down to bring the shadows of night upon her chosen town - she carefully left her house in Church Street. It was not that she needed the money, or even, then on that evening, the life-force that she would drain away from him until he almost expired. Rather, she desired - craved - the excitement that another such encounter would most certainly bring.

The streets and paths of Shrewsbury centre were alive, for it was warm and humid: following the end of another bright and sunny Summer's day, and the people she hid from during the daylight hours were taking advantage of their evening. Couples - mostly young - happy in their love; groups of friends, enjoying companionship, life, and the many varied gifts of such a modern town where many Cafés and Inns in the Summer season placed tables outside, such were the hopes for, the memories of, balmy English nights. And she was, there, among them, only one more face, only a beautiful face of curvaceous lips, only a slim - if elegantly dressed - silhouette, there among the throng where the lane from her town centre dwelling took her past Butcher Row toward the steps that led to the medieval and old timber framed houses of Fish Street.

Behind her, as she descended those well-worn stairs, there was laughter from among the people seated on their seats outside the Bear Steps café, and she was about to turn left to walk down the street when a group of five casually dressed young men sauntered toward her as they egressed that narrow shut of overhanging buildings named Grope Lane.

"Give us a kiss, darling!" one of them shouted as he stopped - slightly swaying in his inebriation - before her, blocking her path.

"Does your baby-sitter know you're not in your cot?" she quipped, pushing past him and deliberately walking down Grope Lane while his companions laughed.

"Who the fuck do you think you are, talking to me like that!" he shouted, angry, his pride hurt, as he - turning to follow her - caught her arm.

"I would advise you to let go of my arm," she said, slowly, staring into his eyes.

Instead, he pushed her into a doorway while his still laughing friends gathered round.

"Go on!" one of them said. "Give her one!"

"Show us your tits!" said another.

"Yeah - show us!" laughed another.

"You wanna see 'em?" the insulted man laughingly asked his friends.

"Yeah!"

"Sure!"

"Go for it!"

So he moved to rip away the thin covering of her expensive dress whose upper part barely concealed her fullsome breasts, but she only smiled at him as her slender right hand caught his left wrist to suddenly twist then bend his strong youthful arm back. The crack was audible, and she pushed him away where he fell onto the cobbles of that lane, groaning in his agony.

She stepped forward then, out of the doorway and, instinctively, the young men moved away until - for some dark reason on that warm languid humid night - another primal instinct assailed them to make one of them lunge toward her, wielding a knife, while another went to grasp her by the neck. The knife caught her, plunged into her left side, but she calmly pushed both attackers away with such force that they bounded against the opposite wall before raggedly falling to the ground. Then, just as calmly, she removed the knife from her side. There was no blood.

They knew fear, then. A cold, stark, wordless body-and-mind creasing fear that made those standing back off and those sprawled on cobbles crawl away as fast as they could move using hands, feet, knees. Such fear: to take them then away, running, stumbling, panicking, down Grope Lane toward a bustling High Street where, even then among the crowds and the bright street lights, they - faces the colour of corpses - did not stop.

Thus did she throw the knife away, before continuing, alone, on her journey.

2

She was pleased when he, her tryst for that night, quickly opened the door in answer to her ringing of the bell. It was a small house, terraced, in a lane above Town Walls and he - in his late twenties, unmarried - was smartly dressed, as she had asked. A lock of her strawberry-blonde hair had fallen across her face - the only sign of her previous encounter - and she, smiling, swept it aside, saying, "Are you going to let me in, then?"

"Yes. Yes, of course."

"I thought we might have a drink here, before we went on to the restaurant."

"What?" Then - "Yes, yes, of course."

She had made him uneasy - as was her intent - and she, rather amused, watched as he, trying to find glasses, a suitable bottle of wine, bumbled rather nervously about the small sitting-room and kitchen of his house, furnished according to his modern minimalist taste.

She had been sitting, the previous night - as she often did - in a dim corner of an Inn in Butcher's Row, waiting. Waiting, dressed as she almost always was on such nights: exotic perfume; jewelled necklace; red lipstick upon her lips; a dress contouring her body, revealing of both breasts and thighs. He had arrived straight from the Solicitor's office where he worked and saw her almost immediately. She did not smile, then, as his senses drunk-in the sight of her body, but instead she turned away. So he - and she - waited, as a few more people arrived, conversations were begun, continued; alcoholic beverages were consumed. And it was as her own, before her, was finished, that he made his expected move.

"Would you like another drink?" he asked, after he in his working but still expensive suit, sauntered, casually, over to her table.

"Yes," she smiled.

"G and T?"

"Rum. Oh, and make sure it is Pusser's. They have some."

He looked - momentarily - surprised, which pleased her, and on his return she surprised him further by saying, "Would you like to take me out to a restaurant for a meal, tomorrow evening?"

"Yes," he said, hesitatingly.

"You seem surprised," she said.

"Well. No - not really."

So she had named a restaurant, and a time, asked for his address, and spent one half of one hour asking about his life, his career, his aims, while he sipped his large glass of White wine and she drank three tots of neat Rum. "I shall call for you, tomorrow, then," she had said, kissing him briefly on his cheek, before leaving him seated, and not a little bewildered, in that Shrewsbury town centre Inn.

The memory pleased her as she sat on his sofa waiting for him to do his duty and provide her with a glass of fine wine, and - when he finally did - she took it gracefully and indicated that he should sit beside her. He - normally so arrogant, so determined, so full of pride - silently did as commanded, and it was not long before she put down her own glass and his and drew him to her to kiss him, her tongue seeking his. So his unaccustomed nervousness gave way to an intense sexual arousal, and it was then that she, gently, pushed him away, saying, "Shall we go and eat, now, and - afterwards - I would like you to spend the night with me at my house."

He was hers, then, and they spent a pleasant enough evening eating fine food and drinking fine wine in a fine and elegant restaurant, while he talked about his life, his dreams, his hopes, and she listened as she listened, until the time came for them to leave when a taxi conveyed them to her own town house where darkness awaited. There were only candles, which she lit to light their way as she led him, not - as he expected - to her bed upstairs but down into the warm clean brick-vaulted cellars that fanned out from beneath her dwelling to stretch beneath the road above, and it was there, upon an antique chaise-longue, that she possessed him after stripping away his clothes.

He was very willingly possessed, for he ardently desired her body and let himself be held down, naked, while she removed her silky thong and lifted up her dress to sit upon him after easing his penis inside her. Thus did she and gently - and, he felt, lovingly - drain from him one bodily fluid to then lie beside him and kiss him for a long time, sucking from him his breath of life until there remained only a little of the vital energy keeping his body, his mind, alive. She left him then deeply deeply exhausted to sleep in the darkness while in a niche a large quartz crystal slowly began to glow. Thus did she satisfied venture forth upstairs to bathe so that when the time for the Sun's rising arrived again she was alone, replenished, ready to dream as she dreamed in her darkned room of those alternate realms of her birth, her alternate

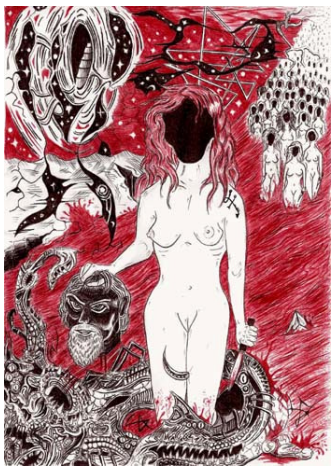
existence, knowing that he, her opfer below, would provide for her in the days, the weeks, to follow while his own weak life-force lasted. And then, his purpose fulfilled, her crystal charged, his money, property, gone, he would be cast off to return to what remained of his Earthly life, where he - as others before him - would in the following weeks languish for months, alone, tormented by nightly sleeping travels into dimensions, places, where no unprepared human should ever go, until - at last, as an almost welcome release - he would die, all alone in the night. There would be no questions; no crime; only one more man, dead, alone.

Thus would she, and only then, return, in the dark of her night, to some Inn - some enclosing warm dim place where young and middle aged men went or gathered - to sit, to preen, to wait. And when she decided her chosen town or city was denuded enough, she would move on, through the years, the decades, centuries, living as she lived, one being of pleasure, of darkness, death, love and night, awaiting he who might - who could, who would - freely, willingly, travel with her to that acausal place of her birth.

She would be free then, returned, at last - as he, her chosen, would be, become, a new eternal being, birthed.

Algar Merridge
119 Year of Fayen

IN THE SKY OF DREAMING



Prologue

The dream had been startling - and he lay in his bed for several minutes while his sense of reality returned and the single Blackbird song that filtered through the window of his cottage became part of the late April Dawn Chorus.

He had dreamt he was standing among a circle of old Yew trees in some graveyard while beside him the dark-haired woman he had just kissed was transformed: into some-thing. She was still transforming as he awoke, his duvet on the floor, his bedsheets dishevelled, his nightshirt wet from sweat. She was beautiful - this young yet middle-aged woman of indeterminate age whose red lips, whose curvaceous buxom body, whose green eyes, had enticed him as he stood, waiting; waiting, for something he felt he knew yet did not quite know; something exciting, vivifying and yet also strange and, perhaps, terrifying: some Being to take form and venture forth again to Earth, released from alternate dimensions and the alternate time which had enclosed it - and her - kin.

In the sky of dreaming: a gibbeous moon; and light from the Sun which had set an hour or so before. And he could see clearly, and quite strangely given it was night, the hillside beyond his circle of trees as the hill of farmed fields descended down to a narrow valley, while - beyond - the further rising hill was wooded except at the very summit where jagged rocks protruded up from the gorse and heather-covered earth.

There was a vague, uneasy, memory that clung to his dream-image of that place - as if he had been there before, sometime in his distant ancestral pagan past. So he lay there, in his bed in his quiet old cottage in the country with only the sounds of the singing birds outside to disturb the peace of rural England. Then, slowly, tired from a

night of broken and disturbed sleep, he got up to stumble forward toward the mirror above the old porcelain sink under the eaves, mindful as he almost always was of the black-painted oak beam that cut across the room.

What he saw in the mirror shocked him, sending him stumbling back toward his bed - until the back of his head hit the beam and he fell. For he had seen the face, the greying hair, of an old man - but he was still only twenty three.

Stumbling up, he looked again. It was no dream - he was an old man, in face and body, his back bent from age; his joints aching; his breathing laboured, his hands arthritic. He called, in his now old raspy voice, to his parents in the room along the narrow corridor. No reply - and so he called again, and again, until he shuffled, slowly, from his room to find their room empty. Totally empty. No furniture; no bed; no old oak wardrobes; no dark oak chest of drawers underneath the small-paned window. Nothing - only the smell of flowers, drifting up from the garden through the open window.

Thus did he pass his day, slowly, perplexed, shuffling - from room to room; from cottage to garden to outhouse to orchard and shed. There was food, in the kitchen - bread and almost stale cheese - and, as an old man unconcerned about his health, he ate them, as he drank a bottle of fine wine from the house's cellar.

There was no telephone - no means of modern communication with the outside world, as he, and his parents, had wished. Only books: thousands upon thousands of books, in the bookcases that lined the downstairs sitting room, the dining room, and hall, from floor to ceiling, and which, in stacks, had inched their way up the winding stairs that led to the four bedrooms, two of which were replete with, and given over to, glass-fronted high cabinets containing his father's prized antiquarian book. mineral, and manuscript collection. He was in his father's study reading from the old vellum manuscript that lay open on the large Oak desk beside a large quartz tetrahedron:

> "In truth, Baphomet – honoured for millennia under different names – is an image of our dark goddess and is depicted as a beautiful woman, seated, who is naked for the waist upward. She holds in her left hand the severed head of a man, and in her right a burning torch. She wears a crown of flowers, as befits a Mistress of Earth…"

It was not that he had forgotten about his missing parents - or the emptiness of their rooms - for he had remembered they had died, over fifty years ago, now. He had been briefly married, then, for almost a year, with a newly born daughter. But they had died in the nearby reservoir, her boat overturned. So so long ago that no feelings now attached themselves to his memories, and - tired from reading - he, an old aching arthritic man, ambled out onto the veranda to sit in the worn Oak chair, to watch the Sun set behind the old cider Orchard, as it always did at this time of year. So many memories, so many that he drifted into sleep.

He awoke to find himself standing in his room, and although he had for some reason he did not know grown accustomed to the strange temporal peculiarities of his life, he was again surprised by his reflexion in his bedroom mirror.

It was of a naked young woman - quite beautiful - whose green eyes complemented the dark hair that framed her features and fell down to her shoulders. Then, there were thoughts in his - in her - head, and images, perplexing images of Life, strange life, seething, seeding, growing, spreading forth from acausal dimensions.

"I am you as you are me, " she - he - was saying, and he understood without knowing why.

"You brought me back to life, here," she - he - intoned, like an echo.

"How long has it been?" he asked.

"For you, only two of your days."

"It was the book, the crystal tetrahedron," he said.

"Yes!" she breathed out, and smiled. And he was forever gone from the causal world he knew.

The body no longer ached from age. Instead, there was desire; a strong, passionate, vibrant, youthful desire that needed to be fulfilled. The body, as the face, was quite beautiful, well-formed, and he was not surprised to find his - her - wardrobe full of women's clothes. She selected an outfit appropriate to the dark passion of her task and it was not long before she ventured forth to feel the warmth of the Sun on her face. It was an exquisite feeling, which she lingered for a moment to enjoy before her first stalking began. And, when satiated - her need fulfilled - she would, could, begin the task for which she had returned to Earth, to the causal, restricting, dimensions of the so-slow-moving limited beings born to die. She - ageless - had been this way before in those forming times before The Sealing when such Earth-bound beings were struggling to develope both speech and thought, and she was, with her new human emotions, pleased to find that such limited life, still, could be easily inhabited and controlled. Thus would she, ageless, be joined by others of her ageless shapeshifting kind.

So she walked across the old Orchard toward the lane that would take her down the hill to a village of living people where she might find someone, or many - some opfer - to provide her with the causal energy she needed to keep her current shapeshifting form.

0: Red Moon Dawning

There was little that he could do, for she had bound his wrists, arms, and legs to the lattice frame that fenced one side of his small unkempt back garden. It had been a pretty, English cottage-garden, thirty years ago.

She had arrived that morning - early, as the Dawn of June broke over his Farm below the wooded hill where oldly named fields and scattered tumulii kept their waiting vigil. Arrived - to pound upon the heavy old Oak door which he, solitary, taciturn, rudely opened, gruffly saying "Yes!", disliking as he did unexpected, expected, visitors and guests. Then: then, his memory after that was confused, hazy, as if a dream-remembered fading with each dwelling upon some moment, some segment, of it. Confused; hazy - until he awoke to find himself in his back garden, lashed fast by bailing-twine.

How, then, had she done this? For he was tall, stocky, strong - even if nearing the sixtieth year of life - while she, strangely beautiful, seemed to his memory but a slim young woman of little obvious strength. Perhaps someone - or many - had helped her. But there was no memory, only the reality of being there, waiting, trussed, as a farm animal awaiting slaughter.

It was a long wait of hours that saw the hot Sun rise and the humid air sweat and thirst him. The cows in the nearby fields - their milking missed - were strangely quiet; his three Farm dogs absent. So he - annoyed, attacked, by flies - waited, waited, silently waited: for his prolonged yelling, profanities, curses, struggles, had worn him down. She had not - no one had - arrived, been seen, in answer. So he in the old worn working clothes he had fallen asleep in, waited, waited, waited… until the setting Sun brought a red moon dawning. The garden came alive then, briefly, scent following scent - honeysuckle, primrose, night-scented stock - bringing with his exhaustion a memory of life thirty years before when his garden bloomed as it had bloomed in Summers when she his wife lived as she, they, had happily lived before Death came to claim her. Then, the brief memory - the too brief memory - gone, he was alone, again, amid the silence.

Alone: until a slight almost lisping sibillation seemed to chorus around him. No words, only a rushing as breeze among dry leaves. Then, quite suddenly, she was there, before him, and he gasped as if intoxicated by her presence, her scent, her beauty. A test, a test, only a test of dreams, memories, life, desire. She was offering him a choice - offering, without words, feelings or even somehow without thought. The vision, the vista, the strange alien life, was there - in him - as she looked at him, and faintly smiled.

Then, he was free from the causal bonds that bound him, and he momentarily staggered to fall to the dry dusty ground, to silently cry out as she smiled before quickly moonlight-walking with her, against his will, toward the summit of the hill. No signs, no portents, came forth from the starry sky above, as nothing visible would

result when his earthly life has been drained away to leave only the shell, only the empty shell, dust to interstellar dust, cosmic atoms to cosmic atom to form, reform, be de-formed, cycle after aeonic cycle.

No, nothing visible: to human eyes. But the cattle in the fields; the Owl; the Farm dogs still cowering in a Barn, the resting sleeping moving hunting hunted life around briefly stopped to feel, to look around, as some-thing now unsealed ventured fastly forth again toward the distant blue planet of Earth as the causal energy she needed seeded itself within her causal female form, bringing the temporary renewal desired.

1: The Seeding

He knew the footpath well, even in the early morning Autumnal dark which reached out to him as he climbed up toward the summit of that wooded hill in rural England. There - tree roots reaching across the worn path; there - the overhanging branch that in the Summer of heavy foliage had been bent lower down to almost touch the broken, now rotten, wooden fence post on his left whose stretching wire had long been worn away by age, rain, frost, neglect. Here - the protruding rocks which snaked down from where the harsh contours of the old limestone Quarry above which had been softened naturally by three decades of abandonment and Nature's resurgent growth.

So he walked steadily, as befitted his age, clothes, in the hours before Dawn, used to the sound of nearby rustling - Deer, perhaps - and the (for him) natural sound of a calling Owl. There was no breeze, and no Moon on this mild mid-October night: but light enough to see by, for eyes used to dark, and senses, body, attuned to the natural being that was Nature. So he walked, as he had done for five and more years from the village where he dwelled on the flat land that bordered the hills and which as pasture continued for miles until it met the sea. Walked - as always - alone: one custom of his reclusive life - scorning any and every artificial light, for he was, had become, almost like the life, the animals, that lived, dwelled. in the almost forgotten woods. Wiry, lean, but well-muscled and with long dark hair going grey which fell around his bearded face lined with nearly three score years of life and three decades of outdoor manual toil which had left his right wrist and hand rheumatic and his lungs a little worse for wear given the long hours spent toiling on dank, rainy, misty, foggy, cold and frosty days.

He did not now even mind the failing vitality of his life, the pains of age, for she - his wife, companion - died five Summers and a Spring ago, and he had grown used to his life alone. The nightly early walks; the work on a neighbours farm; the evening meal where he sat in his chair by the fire drinking glass after glass of Port until tiredness overcome him and he slept, fitfully and for a while. No, he did not mind, not any more - for there was recompense enough in the shrouding, shielding dark; in being-with the life around, in, of the woods, the hills, the very earth, which life he felt as he felt his breath drawn in on a cold and frosty cloud-free Dawn when he would, did,

stand - had stood - on that hill's summit clear of trees, that hill's summit a valley, a wood and two paths distant, from where he could see the distant sea and the Sun as it rose bringing a soft joy that seeped into his very bones and a feeling, a feeling, of no longer being alone.

It was as if he belonged there, now - there, on that summit where the old ancient human circles of earth fortifications and trenches of thousands of years ago had been breached, reduced, covered, by the process of Nature's natural change.

He was not surprised to see her, there on the summit - standing on the raised mound of broken grass-covered rocks that marked the almost-centre of the not-quite-round upper fortifications. Standing there, as the dark grey of nearly Dawn gave way to the lighter grey that marked the cloud-obscured rising of another Autumnal Sun. She was dressed in green, as he was; but his olive green seemed drab beside her verdant richness, and as he slowly walked the last twenty upward yards toward her, the rising gentle breeze gently raised the ends of her auburn hair. She turned toward him then, and smiled.

No, he was not surprised to see her, standing, smiling: for she was his dream of the previous night; a woman, beautiful, mature yet of indeterminate age, whose green sapphire necklace both emphasized her green eyes and the tanned skin of her neck and shoulders. Not surprised to see her in that long verdant flowing dress that emphasized her well-proportioned voluptuous body.

But he was startled - momentarily shocked - when she came forward and touched him. He felt the warmth of her hand on his face; felt her soft fingers caress the dry roughness of his cheek. Felt the warmth, the scent, of her breath as she leant her face close to his, and all he could do was stand totally still with a palpitating heart and look into the cosmos of her eyes.

There was no need for words, he knew: for she was his thought and, in that dark numinous moment, the very thread by which he clung to life. She had been waiting for him - waiting for one like him to venture forth close to those sinister pathways where she and her kind waited, dwelling, long century after long century, thousand year after thousand year until almost two Aeons had passed. So he felt and so he knew, beyond words and a rational understanding, and she kissed him then, as a lover might, draining away from him the pains of his age and becoming for him, in him, that warmth of languid repose felt when two lovers, tired, sweaty, sleep together naked body entwined with naked body.

He was not to know, then - as she caressed him and bared her nakedness for him to touch and feel and kiss and enter - that she needed his seed to bring forth into the world a new kind of life. But had he known, then, he would not have cared. So he let his passion, his need, guide him, until he, she, spasmed in ecstasy as the warm Sun rose higher to warm the human world that dwelt upon, around, the land below that old and sacred hill while They, waiting, were watching as they waited and watched,

almost formless in those formless acausal spaces where they dwelt. Waited, waiting, for their bodies as she had waited for hers.

He lay with her, naked body upon naked body, for what seemed to him a long time as part of her seeped into him bringing without words an understanding of what he must do and why. She was offering him a choice, a genuine choice, and he was free to rise and dress himself and walk away even as some-thing, some kind of life, was seeding itself in the womb of her human body.

His choice was to stay; to do as she - as They - desired, and his first willing task would be to seek out and find some women of child-bearing age and bring them to this place so that others might seep through the ever-opening nexion to inhabit their bodies and to breed from them the new species They needed. Thus would he use those acausal seeds that she, in and through and after their joining, had planted in him - talents, skills, and magick: to entice, entrap, beguile, bewitch, ensnare. And thus would he, alive, be rewarded - with her warmth, her touch, her kiss, her body.

2: Zarid, The Pretender

Zarid's day began - as it usually did - with his Russian partner bringing him a cup of black coffee while he lingered and languished in his bed in the stuffy attic room of their house where he slept, surrounded by books and discarded clothes. Years ago Zarid had retreated at night to this room, his lair, to leave his common-law wife to sleep with their child in their room on the first floor of the large Edwardian house, and this retreat had become his habit, his routine, for he valued his privacy and his time, his priority his work at the nearby University, his obsession with seducing young women and his own secret submissive desires.

That morning of the damp overcast November day, he was tired, but aroused by the dream of his night, and, naked, he slunk down the steep winding stairs that led to the first floor and the bedroom of his wife. She was there - attractive, blonde-haired - dressing, and turned to look at him as he entered but he wasted no time on endearments and pleasantries but instead caressed her breasts before telling her of his desire.

She was used to his ways, her early romantic love having given way to the strange practicalities of their strange shared life, and she wearily followed him into their large bathroom where he lay, on the tiled floor, waiting. She did not disappoint, and, squatting over him, urinated on his body and face while he took his own selfish pleasure with his hand. Satiated, he showered and obsessively groomed himself while she attended to the many tasks of her day, and it was not long before he, dressed in his usual ensemble of long black leather jacket, black shoes, grey shirt and dark trousers, departed to walk the mile to his University office, knowing that she, his companion of five years, would assuredly clean the bathroom. He kept promising to marry her, as she, and part of him, desired, for then his little lie of years ago to the

University authorities, to others (and sometimes even to himself) would no longer lie in wait to trap him.

He was a tall man, merging seamlessly into his middle-thirties, whose hair - to his chagrin - has begun to thin and recede, and whose body already bore the marks of his life and occupation: stooped shoulders, from hours hunched over books, and a pale complexion occasioned by his indoor existence. He did not care that, until recently, his place of work had been a Polytechnic in a northern industrial city - for he had achieved his dream of being a Professor, a dream nurtured by his boyhood desire to escape from what he felt was the cloying, enclosed, dreary, mundane, banal, dead-end world of the old terraced streets of Leeds where his family had lived for generations and pursued their occupation as tailors, and which he left aged eighteen, never to return. So he was proud of his success, if not of his first name - a choice of his mother's in honour of her immigrant grandfather from the Ukraine - and eager, this morning of threatened rain, to seat himself at his cluttered untidy desk and compose his forthcoming lecture. Then, that task over, the Professor of Philosophy who taught ethics would gleefully plan another secret assignation with another of his female students.

It was not to be however, for, awaiting him in his modest somewhat cramped office in a rather anonymous modern building, were two unsmiling conservatively dressed middle-aged men in dark suits, one of whom introduced himself as a Detective Sargent named Malloy. As they sat opposite him, Zarid - in his rather more comfortable chair - nervously played with his fountain pen.

"We believe you know this woman," Malloy said, without preamble, showing him a photograph.

Yes, he did - but he held the photograph for a long time before saying, "She does seem familiar. I can't seem to place her, at the moment."

"Sandra Letton. She was a student here."

Zarid pretended to peer at the photograph again. "Ah yes. How can I help?" He smiled, rather unconvincingly.

"She went missing several weeks ago."

"Last I heard, " Zarid said, "she'd moved to work in Cheltenham. Some sort of Civil Service job, I think."

The two men look at each other knowingly before Malloy said, "We understand you had a relationship with her." It was not a question.

Zarid's face went a greyer shade of grey. "That was a while ago, now. Just a brief, casual thing."

"Indeed, so you say," Malloy replied, in a tone Zarid found both intimidating and disapproving.

"I haven't heard from her in a long time," Zarid lied, then instantly regretted saying it.

The two men betrayed no emotion. "Well," Malloy said, standing up, "if you do hear from her, we'd appreciate it if you would contact us," and handed him his card.

"Yes, yes, of course," Zarid replied, his hand shaking as he took it.

"Your public lecture next week," Malloy's hitherto silent companion said, in a cultured accent, as he and Malloy stood at the door. "Very interesting and pertinent topic."

"How did you know about that?" Zarid asked.

But the man only smiled, and then they were gone, from his office, as a mixture of conflicting emotions assailed Zarid. The glass of dry Madeira he poured for himself - from the small cabinet beside his desk - calmed him, a little, and he opened his notebook computer to read again her e-mail, received the evening before.

> "Hi Zarid, how you doin? I bet you've kept those photos, haven't you, you naughty boy! It would be great to meet up asap, have a drink (or three!) and chat and maybe - something else, like old times! I'm in your area again for a while. By the way, I've got a wicked story to tell you about a friend of yours. Call me on……."

Without thinking, Zarid dialled the mobile telephone number.

"Sandra?" he asked in reply to the "Hello?"

"Yes?"

"Zarid."

"Hi! Can you meet me?"

"Yes, yes, of course!" he said, remembering their many trysts and her sexy body.

She gave a place, not far, and a time - that evening - and he, after that quick call which she quickly terminated for some reason he did not dwell on, spent the day caught between turmoil, expectation, excitement, and a wordless feeling of unease which he tried, unsuccessfully, to dissipate by concentrating on his work. He wrote a few pages of his lecture, gave up, stood for a long while blankly staring out of his office window, and then sat, disinterested, through a tutorial with one of his students, before leaving the campus to wander into the centre of the city, unaware of the two men discreetly, and professionally, following him.

So he wiled away the late morning and the afternoon hours of that damp overcast November day dallying in various cafés, often taking from the inside pocket of his jacket one of the notebooks he always carried to record his musings and his thoughts, occasionally scribbling away, with his fountain pen, immersed in his worlds of philosophy and sexual fantasy, and smiling once - several times - as he remembered how Sandra had pleased him and how she had allowed him to wear her damp panties, and the suspenders he had bought her.

Then, in the descended darkness of that busy city, he wandered forth to be down by the river where no trees shadowed the footpath by a built-on ancient meadow and the wide railway bridge funnelled a noisey train. He was there, approaching the chosen spot at the chosen time, and saw her, in that diffuse glow sent forth from sodium city lights, waiting. She smiled in greeting, as he did, and he was within three feet of her forming words of humorous welcome when she unexpectedly and slowly tumbled forward.

He caught her, as she fell, but she was already dead, her warm blood staining his hand.

For a minute, and more, Zarid held her, not knowing what to do in the emotional and physical numbness that enveloped him. Then, he was aware of someone standing over him as he knelt still cradling her dead body; aware of others, nearby. They - everything - seemed to him to be moving slowly. Blue flashing lights; distant voices. "Single shot…back of head…" Then another nearer voice, which suddenly intruded upon him.

"Let's get you out of here. You're in serious trouble…"

Zarid recognized the speaker. It was DS Malloy.

3: Consequences

He disliked milky sugared tea, but Zarid drank it nevertheless - his third cup that morning - as he waited, shivering, in the warm brightly-lit, windowless, small and

rather clinical interview room of his local Police Station. Waited, still dressed in the white forensic coverall given to him the previous evening, after his own clothes had been taken and before he was locked in a cell whose stark light was constant. Waited, as he had waited all of the evening and many hours of that night, awake, alone. Awake, alone - except for a startling dream during one short period of fitful sleep. He had dreamed that a beautiful woman was in the cell with him. She was chanting some name which he could not quite hear, and smiling at him, exuding a warmth that he could feel, physically feel; gesturing for him to come toward her, and he was about to do so when the cell door opened, returning him to a cold, severe, reality.

Thus was he waiting, again, for some questions; for answers, and thus did he sit that morning waiting for one of the two men opposite him to say something, anything. They just sat there, their arms folded, looking at him as they had looked at him earlier the previous day in his office; sat there, watching, until Malloy - slowly, with a practised ease - took from the folder in front of him several photographs, laying them neatly out on the utilitarian table.

Zarid knew then that they, or someone, someone from the Police, had been to his house.

"Did you know she was pregnant?" Malloy suddenly said.

"No, no I didn't."

"Is that why you killed her?"

"This is ridiculous!" Zarid said.

"Is it? You lied about not having been in contact with her…"

"I can explain."

"I'm sure you can. Just what information did she pass onto you?"

"Information? What information?"

"You knew she worked at GCHQ, didn't you?"

"Where?"

"Don't play games. We found this letter, from her, in your house." From the folder Malloy produced a three page wordprocessed letter.

Zarid glanced at it. It was addressed 'My Dear Naughty Boy!' and signed, by hand in lilac-coloured ink, 'With love and kisses, Sandra.'

"I've never seen it before."

"So you say. She goes into some detail about her work. Classified, government work."

"Like I said, I've never seen it before."

"The evidence against you is piling up."

"Look," Zarid said, afraid and rather annoyed at the same time, "I'd like to see a Solicitor. I'm entitled to, right?"

"Under normal circumstances, yes. These are not normal circumstances."

"But - "

"Aiding and abetting someone who has supplied you with classified information is a serious offence," Malloy said. "Then there is the matter of your affairs with your students - an impressive record, which would come out during a trial. The matter of lying to us. The images we found on your computer. The drugs found at your home and in your office. The fact that your Russian partner doesn't appear to have a valid residence permit. And so on."

"I get the picture."

"But we're prepared," Malloy continued, unsmiling, and collecting the photographs and letter together, to place them back in the folder, "to forget about all these things, if you'll agree to help us."

"Me? Help? How? So you know I didn't kill her?"

"We're working on that assumption."

Relieved, Zarid eagerly asked, "How can I help?"

"We know she went to see a friend of yours, last week."

"Yes?"

"A certain Esmund Yaxley."

"I didn't know they knew each other," said Zarid, with genuine surprise.

"Whatever. But you know his reputation, his past, his activities."

"Yes, yes, of course. But - I've nothing to do with that."

"We know. But we'd like you to go see him, and find out what he knows."

"About Sandra?"

"Yes."

"See him, when?"

"The matter is urgent; a question of national security; so today."

From the briefcase which had been beside his chair on the floor, Malloy's silent companion produced a new, boxed, mobile telephone, two large bundles of twenty pound notes, and two official-looking forms.

Malloy pushed the money over to Zarid. "Expenses. We'll need you to sign this receipt, for the money, and this document, which you should read first."

Zarid read, and signed, as he was told.

"We will arrange transport to take you to the Station."

"But my work; tutorials…"

"All taken care of. A leave of absence has been arranged. And we've brought a few clothes from your house."

"My wife…"

"I'm sure you can think of something!" For the first time that day, Malloy smiled. "From now on, " he continued, as his companion returned the signed receipt and signed document to his case, "you'll be in contact with Malin, here."

"My contact number," Malin said, "is already stored in the telephone, which is connected, with the battery fully charged. I shall expect to hear from you this evening."

4: Nexions

The warmish Sun of mid morning caught Zarid as, carrying a small travel bag, he walked the short distance down to the Railway Station entrance from where the anonymous car, and driver, had deposited him. He was glad of the Sun, of his freedom, and lingered by the entrance for a while. Then, ticket bought with a little of the given cash, he joined the throng heading for the busy platforms. Once, he thought he saw the woman of his dream the previous night, and rushed toward her - but he was mistaken, and was left, feeling rather foolish, to wait as the others waited for the southbound train.

Esmund Yaxley. Why was he not surprised he might be somehow involved? The train arrived, on-time, and he was glad to sit within its warmth, to try to give some meaning, some semblance of meaning, to the rapid unsettling unforeseen events of the last two days. The warmth, the slight swaying motion and slight constant almost rhythmic noise of the train, his own tiredness, combined to relax him, a little, and once - to his surprise - he found himself overcome with sadness and a certain grief at Sandra's death. A single tear: then, unsettling questions to which he had no answers assailed him, and slowly - as fair-weather cumulus clouds pass slowly below the blue-sky of a languid almost breezeless English Summer day - he understood his situation.

He had been, was being, manipulated, and maybe - just maybe - his old friend Esmund could provide him with some answers. Esmund; the wiry but bearded and fit and well-muscled Esmund who had spent the last decade since their time together at University flitting from one place, to another, from one adventure to another, always seeking something that seemed - at least to Zarid - forever beyond his reach, and acquiring along the way a somewhat sinister reputation, aided by three spells in prison, for violence, association with a variety of disreputable and sometimes criminal characters, and his interest in, and knowledge of, the Occult.

But, soon, physically and emotionally tired, Zarid was briefly asleep, dreaming of that beautiful woman again.

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"What brings you here?" Esmund said, jovially. He was sitting on a bench in his well-tended cottage garden in the beginning twilight of what had been a warmish day.

"Just wanted to get away for a few days. Domestic things, you know."

"Is that so?" And Esmund looked at him quizzically.

Zarid sighed. "No, not really. Have you heard? About Sandra?" He sat down on the bench, tired from the exertion. It had been a long journey, involving several changes of train, and a taxi from the market town on the edge of the Costwolds to the small village where Esmund's small cottage lay, up a track inaccessible to motorized vehicles and near the top of a wooded hill. Esmund's Border Collie dog had eyed him suspiciously as Zarid had opened the somewhat rickety wooden gate, then decided not to bark and returned to his slumber by the Cherry tree.

"Yes, there was a brief report, on the news."

"I was there, when she died. She came to see me."

"She said she might," Esmund said.

"So you did know her then?"

"Yes."

"And that she was pregnant?"

"Would you like some tea? I have Keemun, and some rather nice Chinese Sencha. Or there is Darjeeling, of course."

"I was thinking of something a little stronger."

"Coffee it is then. Ethiopian, or Kenyan? Come on in." Esmund led him into the small, recently refurbished and very tidy kitchen. "Espresso, Americano, Cappuccino?" he asked.

"You're joking."

"No. One of life's many little civilized pleasures," and Esmund pointed to his one-group espresso machine.

As darkness descended, they drunk their coffee, black, in silence - seated in comfortable armchairs before the bright warming log-fire of the cottage sitting-room - until Zarid said, "You seem quite comfortable and settled, here."

"Surprised?"

"Yes. Is this place yours?"

"Yes, and no. Belongs to a lady friend of mine."

"It figures!"

"So, about Sandra. What do you want to know?"

"Did you know that she was pregnant?"

"Yes."

"By you?"

Esmund smiled. An enigmatic smile. "Would you like to meet her, this lady friend of mine?"

"Possibly. I don't know. Did you know about Sandra's work?"

"Of course. She made no secret of it. She was very helpful, to us," and he looked at Zarid in that penetrating way he had.

"Us? Not one of your Occult groups?"

"Not really. Beyond all that mundane passé stuff. You really should meet her, you know."

"Who?"

"She wants to meet you. In fact, I've invited her here this evening. You'll be staying here, for at least tonight, I presume?"

"If that's OK with you."

"Certainmont! The guest room is ready. Shall I show you, then you can refresh up while I prepare us some dinner? Nothing special, just some Trout I liberated from a stream down the hill."

The guest room of low-ceilinged beams was small, with small windows, as befitted the small old cottage of thick walls, but it was - or seemed to Zarid to be - immaculately and tastefully furnished. There were crystal decanters, of Port and Sherry, on a small table by an armchair near the small fireplace where a fire of coalite burned, spreading a warming glow and a restful warmth.

"Help yourself to an aperitif," Esmund said. "There's a jug, and basin, for a wash." And he indicated the old marble-topped stand in one darkened corner.

"Thank you," Zarid said, and meant it, surprised by the hospitality.

"Oh, and if you need a light to see by, there are some candles, in holders, there. I much prefer candlelight, don't you," Esmund said, and smiled.

Then Zarid was alone, amid the country silence, and he took advantage of Esmund's absence to try his newly acquired mobile telephone, surprised to find there was signal strength enough for him to make a call.

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The meal of whole baked Trout, with lemon and parsley butter and fresh vegetables, over, they settled with their glasses of vintage Port by the fire in the candle-lit sitting room.

"This is all very civilized," Zarid jovially said.

"What did you expect?"

"Well - "

"Don't answer that!"

"Really, I would have visited you sooner, if I'd known."

"You are here now."

"Yes." Zarid felt very tired, almost exhausted, and he briefly closed his eyes before the exotic sensual scent brought him back from the verge of sleep.

She was there - the woman of his dream of the night before - standing beside Esmund who held her hand. She wore a green sapphire necklace and a long verdant flowing dress that emphasized her well-proportioned voluptuous body, and Zarid felt her warmth seeping out to touch him.

But something - some fear once deeply hidden, some nameless dread, something from his own ancestral past, and perhaps also some small knowing of his betrayal of his friend - overwhelmed him in the instant of that sensuous breeching searching touch so that he, gasping, screaming - while Esmund laughed - rose to stumble backward to lurch toward and out from the door to run down the path, falling, scampering over the gate, arms flaying, to the track and the road nearly a mile below where a single street light reminded him to pause and think and seek the best way homeward.

In his head: visions and vistas and words and sounds and laughter. She had touched him, if only for an instant, and all the answers he came to seek, he was sent to seek, he knew, along with many answers to questions he wished he did not know.

5: Homeward

Zarid could not sleep, nor relax, on the even longer journey back to his home. Twice - three times, more - he fumbled with his mobile telephone, and twice, three times - more - he did not call his contact as part of him desired. Would would he say? What could he say? The whole matter was beyond belief - unbelievable - and the more he thought about it, the more he became convinced no one, least of all Malloy and Malin, would believe him.

So he spent many hours of that tedious journey through the dark of night striving to concoct some convincing story that he might tell. One version had him denying everything; another - that Esmund and Sandra were simply lovers. Or that she was some Priestess, a Mistress of Earth, even, in one of Esmund's many sinister covens. Or that Esmund was going to sell the information Sandra had provided to one of his criminal contacts. But who, then, killed her, and why? The sad, even tragic, thing was that he did know, and this knowledge placed him in danger.

It was in the taxi - well beyond the hour of midnight - on the journey from the Railway Station to his home that he believed he had found a suitable deceptive answer. He would telephone Malin tomorrow, and pleased with himself, he finally began to feel a little relieved. It did not last, for, inside his house, there was no wife

waiting to greet him, no child asleep for him to briefly watch, as he often did, before he ascended the stairs to his private eyrie - only Malloy and Malin and two armed Policemen.

"Where are they?" he anxiously asked as he tried to trawl his house before being restrained by Malloy.

"We've taken them into protective custody."

"Why?" he somewhat stupidly asked.

"You found what we wanted, haven't you?" Malin asked him.

"No. I don't know." He felt intimidated, and his resolve to lie began to weaken. He might - probably had been - followed to Esmund's cottage, as they - Malloy and Malin and those who controlled them - might, and probably already did, know the answers, or at least some of them. Why else had they taken his family into protective custody? Or was that itself a ruse, pressure, blackmail, a means to get him to talk? He was beginning to become confused, for his mind again became suffused with visions and vistas and words and sounds and laughter, for she - some alien being - had touched him.

"Can I see my wife?" he asked, trying to calm himself.

"Later, " Malin said, harshly.

You do realize, don't you, Zarid," Malloy interjected, softly, "that this is a matter of national security?"

"Possibly; yes."

"Therefore, surely your duty is to tell us everything that occurred, everything that you learnt."

"Here?"

"No."

So he was taken back to the Police Station where he sat, with another cup of sickly sweet milky tea in another interview room, with Malloy, Malin and another, older, well-dressed and unidentified man who stood by himself in a corner of that room.

"This interview will be recorded," Malloy said, somewhat unnecessarily, as he turned the machine on.

Zarid began, slowly, hesitatingly, telling of Esmund's admission of knowing that Sandra was pregnant; of him receiving information from her; but it was when he spoke of the women - recalling her - that his slow hesitation ceased, and the words flowed fastly, fluidly, from him as if he was being guided, for his mind became suffused again with visions and vistas and words and alien sounds.

> "She who touched me is not quite human, you see, as Sandra's child was not, which I'm sure you already knew. They have this plan, you see, to breed a new not quite human species, half human, half alien. She - They, these shapeshifters - need human bodies, at least to begin with. They want to live again, to dwell, again, on Earth: to have form and to cease to be formless. To live, to feel, to love. To guide. Thus, They came back and They will come back, dwelling in human bodies. They need humans to begin with at least like I said as they believe humans need Them. To evolve, together, a symbiosis. That is the key. Symbiosis. They were here thousands upon thousands of years ago, at the dawning of our consciousness, but They were then unable to complete their work, for there were The Others, who opposed Them, and who opposed her - the prime nexion, The Beginning - and who did their own dark work, botched experiments, botched changing, and whose botched living experiments stayed. They got it wrong, you see, The Others; wrong - for they produced a strange, vindictive and twisted and unstable and mutant brood who survived on Earth by their mendacity and ruthless cunning and who made keeping their mutated blood pure into some kind of religion.
>
> "Those humans were genetically-modified by these Others, the evil ones, and their mutant descendants are among us now, manipulating, controlling, planning. Slowly, they have planned, with their ruthless cunning, with the inbred slyness they possess, and over the last hundred years - especially the last seventy years - they, or their agents, have seized clandestine control of our governments, here in Britain, in America, using the power of money, of the Media - which are both under their control - and using the myths, the ideas, they have invented, to control humans, to manipulate humans not of their own kind. The first stage of their plan is for a world government of control, and that is nearing completion.
>
> "To this end they engineered wars, and get some people or, mostly, their own agents among humans to do vile things just so they can get governments to react to them and introduce more laws, more measures of control, more repression, more tyranny, and all in the double-speak name of "freedom and democracy", the false idols which their servants and their lackeys worship and obey, but which the mutants don't. But they have found willing and brutal allies in many lands - particularly in America. They - or their agents and allies - persecute, and torture, and hound, or revile, or discredit, or kill, or imprison on some pretext or other, anyone who knows their plans or who sees them for what

they are. That is, they now have the power, the influence to destroy anyone, any person, any group, any country, they want to - to get them out of the way.

But She - They, her shapeshifters from the acausal - want humans to be genuinely free, as evolved individuals; so She has come back as They will come back to liberate humans from those, The Others, the evil ones, and their mutant servants, so that humans might evolve and take their destined place among the stars and particularly among the acausal dimensions. The mutant, materialistic, causally-tied spawn of The Others, you see, have forgotten their origins, lost their true past, do not know who manufactured them, changed, them, made them what they were and are, but they do fanatically believe they are chosen, that it is they who should, who must, who have been chosen to, rule this world and its peoples, whatever the human cost and the misery they cause. They really are the spawn of evil; agents of evil - and She and her siblings will stop these bastard descendants of The Others who cannot ever reach out to, or travel among, or exist in, the timeless blissful beautiful realms of the acausal. But humans can - and can eternally exist there, in the acausal when the new symbiosis is complete."

He was finished, exhausted, himself again, and saw Malloy looking at Malin with a look of disbelief.

"I see," Malloy said, annoyed, before stopping the recording.

"You don't believe me - all that - do you?" Zarin quietly said, uneasy and perplexed.

"Frankly, I'd have thought an intelligent man like you would have come up with a better story than crap and fantasy like that." Turning to the unidentified man he said, "We're finished here, I think?"

The man nodded, and left the room.

"You disappoint me, you really do," Malloy said to Zarid.

Zarid was taken to a cell, where he waited, nervously, for something to happen. For what seemed like hours, nothing did, and he gradually succumbed to his exhaustion, to dream of the beautiful woman. She was speaking to him without words and he felt her moving closer, closer to him until he smelt again her quixotic perfume - but the dream, the beautiful vision, was snatched away from him as two men entered his cell to bind his arms behind his back and tie a dark hood over his head.

He tried to struggle, but the injection he was given soon took effect and he was taken through the corridors of a curiously deserted and darkened Police Station to a waiting van.

"Nothing happened here," Malin said to Malloy as, outside in the cold night air, they watched the van being driven away.

"Your people checked the foetus, I take it?" Malloy asked.

"Perfectly normal," Malin lied.

***

Esmund knew he was under surveillance, and the reason why - even before Zarid's arrival - and his years of experience of living on and often beyond the fringes of the law had made him prepared for most eventualities. So, from behind the false wall in the cellar of his cottage, he collected the items he considered he might need to evade and escape from those watching him so that he might keep the rendezvous with Raynould on that ancient hill circle where she, their dark goddess, had first touched Raynould and where in the coming hours of darkness she would give birth to his half-human child. For a few seconds, Esmund felt a little jealous of the man he had never met, but he calculatingly placed that human emotion aside.

He selected a variety of weapons - his favoured long-barrelled revolver with hand-loaded rounds; a handy pump-action shotgun; a grenade or two - and a passport, and driving license, for a new identity as well as a small rucksack containing a variety of clothes, bottled water, and toiletry items. Then, as the bright Sun of that early morning rose into the clear sky that had brought the nightly frost, he - revolver in hand, shotgun slung over his shoulder, rucksack on his back - sauntered casually out into the garden, followed by his dog.

"Stay!" he said, and his canine friend obeyed. There would, Esmund knew, be a woman, a lover from the village below, to care for his dog, for however long he was away.

Scorning the path, Esmund vaulted over the fence into the steeply sloping grazing field that adjoined the eastern side of his garden and began to run up, and right at an angle, toward the summit of his hill. There was no cover there for those who might follow him from below, and he had run almost two hundred yards when he saw them begin their delayed pursuit. He had assumed there would be others, covering the summit and the descent from the hill, and he was correct, for he had almost reached to tall centuries-old spreading Ash that grew beside the old summit pathway when he saw two armed Policemen who moved to block his way.

"Armed Police!" one of them shouted, raising his weapon. "Stop! Armed Police!"

Esmund did not stop. Instead, he dropped down, took aim and quickly fired three rounds from his revolver. The bullets hit their targets and he rose to run forward. One of his opponents was dead, shot in the forehead, but the other, only lying injured, was struggling to raise his weapon just as Esmund reached him. Esmund pointed his revolver at the man's head saying, "Sorry mate, nothing personal," before taking the man's holstered Glock pistol and his HK MP5 submachine gun and side-stepping to turn and fire at the armed plainclothes Police Officers still running up the hill toward him. He shot one in the leg before moving sharp left and sprinting toward the woods that covered part of the western side of the hill.

The woods gave him the opportunity he needed - for he knew them well - and he zigzagged down, through the trees, stopping once to stand and listen. He heard shouts, above, and the sound of someone, or two, noisily moving through the leaf-litter and breaking small fallen twigs. There would be Police dogs, and a helicopter, and more men, he knew - but not now; not for a while. So he made it to his first destination without being seen: a path beside a stream to take him to where a vehicle waited, left for just such a time as this, hidden in a rented barn.

It did not take him long, in the old inconspicuous Land Rover, to reach the junction where the narrow rutted pot-holed tarmaced lane that for nearly two miles had weaved between fields of pasture gave way to a minor road, and he turned westerly, driving until he found a place suitable enough to stop. It was a wide gated field entrance, and he parked to begin his change of identity. It took him longer than he remembered to trim his beard with scissors and then completely shave it off, but - pleased with the results - he changed his shirt, and jacket, and, with a tweed cap upon his head, his weapons out of sight, the transformation was complete.

No one stopped him as he travelled South, and he became just one driver in one of the multitude of vehicles that thronged the roads of England.

6: Aperiatur Terra, Et Germinet Atazoth

Esmund was early for the rendezvous, in the hour before dusk, and spent a cautious hour scouting out the area. He had parked his vehicle down a secluded track near the foot of the hill, taking only his rucksack, his revolver with spare ammunition, the Glock pistol, and a hand-grenade, before bobby-trapping the vehicle with his remaining grenade.

Satisfied with his reconnaissance, he settled down to wait by a spreading but wind-twisted Hawthorn bush, a good distance away from the hill's ancient fortified summit. There was the crescent Moon above the western horizon, and then stars in the clear darkening sky, and he continued to wait in the cold darkness for what seemed, and what was, a long time, before stretching himself and moving forward a little distance. They were, by now, many hours late, and he was deciding how much longer he would

wait when he sensed someone behind him, and spun round, revolver raised, and ready.

Nothing; no one; no sound. And so he returned to his cautious waiting vigil until he saw something, some shape, fastly coming toward him from the summit of the hill. The shape was tawny white-ish and as it got nearer Esmund saw it was an Owl. There was no sound, just that bird of prey coming straight toward him and looking straight at him. He was surprised by its size, its wing-span, and it was within only three feet of him, its talons extended as if to land on his head, when he instinctively ducked down and it veered away to his left. When, only seconds later, he looked again it was gone, down - he assumed - into the copse of trees that clung to the lower slopes of the hill.

Then she was standing beside him, and he rose to his feet without fear. She kissed him, then, and pressed her body into his, her tongue caressing his, and her hand stroking his face.

"We are alone and no harm can come to you here," her melodious voice said as unspoken words within his head, and she gave him a vision of her past hour and more.

Of how she had gently painlessly given birth while Raynould watched. Of how he had taken the human-looking girl-child to a place she had provided for him where his role would be to care for that child as he would care for the other such children born that night and in the few days to all those women - except Sandra - who were seeded. Of how those children had grown quickly in their adopted wombs and how they would, as children, also quickly grow over the next few years until they were ready enough to go forth into the world, each one a nexion waiting to open, to be physically seeded, and to seed in their various and magickal ways those powerful acausal energies which would, in causal-time, break down the barriers of The Others and steadily weaken through many causal presencings the causal that now held so many humans in thrall. Thus would her children gather the allies they needed, in secret at first; thus would they begin the great change that would break-down the very causal order itself; and thus would they breed a new and more evolved race, a new species to seed themselves among the very stars.

There would be those who feared this; those who hated her children and her allies. Those prepared to fight until the last drop of human blood. Those hate-filled ones who would strive to find, to ruthlessly hunt, down her children and their children's children, just as they had found Sandra whom Esmund had seeded: the Sandra whom she changed with her acausal and shapeshifting arts after he, magically adept, had called to her, longed for her, one night having felt her presence, her return to Earth. So had he touched her essence, and so she found him, came unto him, while he lay asleep in Sandra's arms, and so did she change that life that only a few causal moments earlier he and Sandra had brought forth into causal-being.

"But you have proved yourself, to me," her melodious voice said as unspoken words within his head, "and you henceforth are my companion and only with you will I henceforth share this my physical form."

So she kissed him again, and he saw as if in replay his escape from his - from her - cottage, and felt again his one jealous moment, as he saw Sandra's death and Zarid being bound, tied, hooded, and injected. But he, Esmund Yaxley, was human - all-too-human, perhaps - and he surrended his body and his love to her, there, on the dark night while a crescent moon descended, as Sirius did, into that almost-Winter's starry sky.

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He awoke to find himself naked under a warm duvet in a bright room of large windows which showed, below, a cityscape under a clear blue sky of an English Winter. For a moment, he felt disorientated, as if both Time and Space had somehow slipped or been distorted and, after looking out of one of the windows which, except for a door, almost seamlessly surrounded the room, he lay down again on the large bed.

He slept then, and dreamed - of the past, a present and a future - and awoke to find himself hot, as the city below basked in the warmth of early Summer. He understood then, in that moment, and was not surprised when she, suddenly, was there beside him, incarnate again, naked in the bed, pressing her body into his and kissing him as they made sensuous love in that, his, city-penthouse. There was, he knew, on a floor below, a child, a female child, growing, nurtured by his lover's breast milk and cared for by her sibling Nanny, as there was, in the city, many deeds of hate and violence while they, the lovers, loved as they loved, entwined within each other's body and each other's being, just as there was, suddenly and for him, no distinction between Time, place and Space: no him, or her; only a being which lived as it, they, as Them, The Dark Gods, lived: within the acausal Times and Spaces. He was alive, then, joyful, ecstatic, breeding with her, in her, the nexions that were needed; alive, joyful, ecstatic, while Zarid - his knowledge a danger to his captors - was languishing, drugged, in some enclosing psychiatric cell, and Sandra his former lover lay dead, her body and her foetus clinically, methodically, dissected.

Thus did they, her - his - enemies, still seek him with a lustful hate and need, and thus did she - his new lover, mistress - protect him as only she could protect him, and thus did he, when he awoke, feel again the pain of his new lover's absence.

So he dressed in one of his many expensive hand-made suits to linger awhile on a floor below with his three young daughters while they played as precocious children played, and their protecting shapeshifting Nanny waited, silent, smiling, watchful, in a corner of that plush room. Soon, they his daughters would venture forth, each to a life, a world, a task, of their own - as he would return to this building to seed her again as the acausal seeped ever more deeply in the causal world he once knew and loved.

He knew, then, as he walked out that particular time-slipping morning into the busy street of that capital city under the warm Sun of an English Summer, that Raynould had been found, caught, tortured, and killed, and his - her - daughter captured. So he was not surprised to find her, his lover, walking beside him as he walked among the bustling hordes of city-dwelling human beings.

There was a human pain, an anguish, in her, which he felt, and he held her hand as they walked along that street where several men, and women, stared, to stop, to look at her, awed by her beauty, her being, her scent. Then, suddenly, he was with her in a bright forensic room where her first-born daughter lay, stretched out and naked and restrained, but alive, on an operating table while men in white gowns and masks stood around and two men in suits stood by a door in one corner.

They, the men in gowns, were cutting the young woman, her daughter of child-bearing age, and she bled, as a human would - as another scalpel was raised, a probe extended to reach into her body. Her daughter turned, then, and smiled - aware of her mother's presence - but the humans saw only Esmund who, angry, snatched the scalpel to slash wildly at throats, faces. The two men in suits came toward him, one - Malin - brandishing a gun, but Esmund was too quick for them as he raged toward them to knock them to the ground, and the carnage - his berserker carnage - was soon over, even as an alarm sounded, the last gesture of one human scientist now lying dead.

Then Esmund, his lover and her daughter were gone from that particular and causal Time and Space, to leave only questions: only more unanswered perplexing questions for Malin and his ilk.

7: Agios Ischyros Baphomet

They - Esmund, his lover and her daughter - rejoiced, and he was with them for what to him seemed a very long time in a place within acausal Time and Space. But it was only a few heartbeats of his dense causal Earth-bound life that passed while he languished in a beautiful blissful timeless eternity where his knowing, his feeling, stretched, or seemed to stretch, from one end of his Earth-containing Galaxy to the other, and where he was, in that singular acausal instant, all life, all living, all beings-coming-into-being, all the living life given and giving birth.

Then he, changed in some way he did not then understand, was back in his, in her, bed, in that bright city penthouse, while her naked and already healed daughter

kissed him and he entered her, taking her human virginity, as her mother lay beside them, touching him, one lover to another. He had never known such bliss, such love, such existence, before in his own brief causal existence, and he lingered within her, this young woman, even as his seed seeded her womb which would bring forth a new kind of life. Agios Ischyros Baphomet, Agios Ischyros Baphomet he, his very being, intoned.

Causal Space and causal Time slipped again, as he knew they must - and he was sitting outside his modest mud-brick dwelling in the shade of a Palm tree dressed in a galabiyyah while, nearby, the younger of his two new young half-Nubian daughters played amid the desert sand and one of his two female domestic helpers carried a large pot to bring back water from the nearby artesian well. His afternoon would be filled with duties, as he instructed his two young male students in the ancient skills and arts of esoteric acausal magick, and - despite his satisfaction with such duties and his role - he still missed his former brief enchanted life in England. It was but a necessary stage - and part of him, most of him, had desired to return with her to her acausal spaces even as her daughter gave birth to their first child. But he stayed, for he was not yet ready or able of his own free will to forever pass beyond, to exist beyond, the causal; stayed, while she herself returned as she the primal nexion had to return to become the strange life-force burgeoning within them all. Stayed, for he would be, as he now was, the beginning of that hidden reclusive Order which would, when the causal Time was right, emerge as the Old Order faded, crumbled, and died, aided and partly caused by those others of the new half-human symbiotic race who now dwelt with their growing number of children, and human helpers and allies, on every continent on Earth.

Already the presence of this new acausal centre, this spreading nexion, was felt, as her daughter - now his wife, and Nubian - achieved a local, and for the moment, clandestine following, there on the fringes of that desert. Such beauty; such wordless power. Men, women, loved, obeyed her - and she had only to think a thought for them to strive to make it real just as each one of them would willingly, gladly, give their life for her, knowing the blissful acausal life which would await them. Thus it was as it had been, there, once before - and as it would be again, on another planet in another causal Time and Space.

Soon, he would as foretold retreat into his own world of reclusive and secret desert-dwelling teaching to leave her majestic, ageless with her ageless daughters as their influence spread, as it would spread until her, their, causal Earth-bound tasks were achieved. But, for now, he was happy to prepare her way: she who would open, be, the new nexion to presence the acausal fully upon the Earth, bringing thus that futuristic culture, that star-travelling, star-dwelling, culture that many humans had dreamt about, beginning as such a culture was of new explorations into the very acausal itself, explorations which could, which would then in that future causal-time - as it would for Esmund and all of his esoteric kind now when they had achieved their Earthly goal - lead them toward and into the next stage of their journey of evolution.

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"You know," Malin said as Zarid lay, in his windowless cell, half-stupefied by the drugs forced into him, "and considering your ancestry you should know, you had it the wrong way round; inverted. We're the good guys."

"Are you? Are you really?" Zarid managed to say. "But you didn't have to kill her or her unborn child, did you?"

But Malin only smiled and left to let three men enter. They did their work quickly, quietly, efficiently, and Zarid was soon dead, only one more casualty of a war that had already begun.

Algar Merridge

Year of Fayen 118

Note: *This brief MS, written by an Adept, and entitled In The Sky of Dreaming, is published, in full, here. Like The Deofel Quartet it is an instructional text written in a non-conventional fictional form. One of its purposes is to outline the reality of The Dark Gods, a reality somewhat obscured by the literary mystifications and misapprehensions of Lovecraft and others.*

CANTAORAS
DARK DAUGHTERS OF BAPHOMET

There was a long moment of silence as the coven of nine women all gathered on the slight slope of that almost South facing hill among the mamelons of South Shropshire not far from where an ancient trackway marked the ancient border with the land of Wales.

Eulalia was there - resplendent in her crimson cloak, as befitted a Mistress of Earth. And Venora - she of the red-hair and the fullsome body which her thin long verdant-coloured covering did little to hide and which thin coverlet seemed to scintillate in the light of the not-quite-full Moon as she, as Priestess, moved counter-sunwise to greet each sorceress with a kiss: moist lips touching moist lips. Then, they were ready, gathered together in an almost perfect ellipse as Eulalia began her vibrated invokation to their Dark Goddess, their Mistress and Mother, Baphomet: *Nythra kthunae Baphomet!*

She held in her outstretched hand a crystal, shaped as a tetrahedron, while her lover, Venora, gestured to the shadows for the two male Guardians to step forth.

Then, seven of the women, handsome of face and lithe of body, with their long dark hair neatly braided and tied, began to chant their haunting sinister chant, a chant so old it was as if the intervening one and half thousand years had never been; as if the *Chant Mozarabe* was still to be heard in sequestered choirs by nuns devoted to the new Nazarene faith - except there was on that South Shropshire hill no Latin words of worship to a some God; no Latin words of praise for some Saviour. Instead: only words of a lisping language long forgotten except by an hereditary few; strange words replete with desire by those few who, remembering, desired a return of those dark, sinister, acausal-entities who thousands of years ago had been presenced on Earth, bringing menace, blasphemy, joy, nightmares, madness, violence, and the much needed Chaos of human evolutionary change.

So they chanted while the tall, strong, Guardians brought forth the needed seed and gift, pinning the naked terrified young man down within the ellipse of now slowly circling cantaoras. There were no audible words to be said, declaimed, or shouted - for none were needed as Eulalia bent down to touch his forehead with the crystal, and she watched, smiling, as his life was quickly;y drained away to leave a corpse, only a corpse, paler and gaunter than it would have been even if all the blood and plasma within had been somehow drained away. Her crystal seemed to iridesce then, as if in rhythm to the chant, and she held it up, arms outstretched to where the Moon, in that very moment, occulted a star named on Earth, Dabih. She felt it, Them, then, within her - as her obedient Guardians effortlessly, efficiently, took the corpse away. Felt the centuries of longing that her own mother must have felt, centuries and

centuries ago; felt the longing for The Dark Gods to be birthed again into joy-giving, joy-receiving, warm bloodfull human bodies.

And then She was there, dwelling among them, accepting the willing if only very temporary offering of Vanora's life and body. There: among the mortals and the half-mortal who had kept the faith; waiting, waiting, coven after coven, through the long centuries for the stars to be aligned as it was said they should be aligned; for the crystal to be fashioned as it was said it should be fashioned; for the chant to be as the chant should be, brought into-being by skilled, chosen, cantaoras. Thus was She, their Dark Goddess, an acausal-being, presenced in the causal, ready to be again a birthing-mother: bringer-into-being of a whole new race. For the time of human Chaos, darkness, death, culling, change, had arrived, again.

Thus did they - the women - greet her with a kiss, lips to moist lips, as thus did the Guardians step forth again from the shadows to kneel in obedience before her.

^^^

Eulalia had planned well. A selection of male victims were already waiting when she and Venora returned to their house, at the end of a track, off a narrow lane between hills in that rural borderland. Although, of course, the men - ranging in age from early to late twenties - did not consider themselves victims, enticed as they had been by the wiles, the sorcery, the sexuality, of the ladies of Eulalia's coven.

So the three young men had waited, in one of the the plush, luxurious, sitting-rooms of that house. Waited, chatting amiably among themselves, as two elderly gentleman, neatly groomed and neatly dressed in somewhat unfashionable clothes, served them food and drink. Waited for the trysts they had been promised among the many bedrooms of that place, assuming as they did in their egoism and desire, many things. But it was not Venora herself nor even one of the young dark-haired lithe and nubile women that awaited them when they were led, by Venora, along a corridor and up some winding stairs to a darkened room: a darkness that seemed oppressive and heavy, if scented by some quixotic perfume.

Thus did they enter, replete with their desire, and thus did a warm strong hand grasp theirs to lead them down upon some soft and scented bed where they, still unseeing, had their clothes removed with ripping force to find themselves pinioned by strong arms and legs while a feminine softness moved over to touch to press down upon them to kiss them, building thus their male desire. But their ecstasy of joy, brought by a sexual joining, was soon over with their seed of life taken from them when a sudden drowsyness seemed to overcome them, then, as they lay, in exhaustion.

Other hands, not soft, grasped them then as they, helpless, were lifted to be taken along a skein of unlit passages to small windowless rooms below. And it was there, in

those rooms - one for each - that they almost stupefied by some-thing, lay, in warmth on a not uncomfortable bed. Lay, waiting, while causal time passed - as causal time passes - in the world above them. Perhaps one of them might be needed, again - and if he was, he would be brought again to that darkened room scented with quixotic perfume. But not one of them would ever see the brightness of day, again.

^^^

So the days passed, in that house, as they passed. Occasionally, a new young man would egress from the causal world outside into its ever-growing strangeness: enticed there, from some near or far city or some town, by unspoken promises, perhaps a kiss, but always by a luscious lady, young or verging on middle-age: it made no difference to the men, for their very beings, enchanted, craved the fulfilment of that strong sexual desire which burgeoned forth from within them to seize them with that first sensual touch or kiss from such a sensuous lady in some Inn, or Club, or Bar. Once, a young man, arrogant, self-assured - his powerful sleek new sporty car outside - had taken it upon himself to press a lady for another kiss when she had sat beside him in some Bar. Gently then - or so it seemed - she held his hand to twist it powerfully back while he tried to not let pain show on his face. She left then, unsurprised when he followed, and they were outside in the street-lit darkness among the rows of cars when he lunged toward her. She was too swift - almost unhumanly swift - and he was left to try and stop himself falling to the ground before steadying himself and trying ungallantly to punch her in the face. She seized him then, to knock him unconscious with one swift blow, and it was in his own car that she drove him back toward the sanctuary of her home.

Her gift was pleasing, and he awoke to stark blinding darkness when something soft, scented, touched him, but it was not long before his life was gone to leave a corpse, only a corpse, paler and gaunter than it would have been even if all the blood and plasma within had been somehow sucked away.

Thus did the months pass until new life came forth there, in that nexion, bringing much joy, and much that was strange, while the great boiler fed warmth into that house as Autumn turned to Winter, often fructified as that boiler was by pale empty hulks, their main purpose having been fulfilled. And thus did that new life grow - growing as children grow, however strange the child - until the time for their departure came when they, the seeded, would be sent forth to seed: male, female, or somewhere in-between, it would make no difference; the same enchantment; the same violence bred; the same darkness, death and Chaos sown.

Once, in the months of their growing, three men came, in two cars, to call upon that house. There were rumours, it seemed, that disturbed them and their Detective-kind. They were served Afternoon Tea, in the heated Conservatory, while Eulalia, as befitted a Mistress of Earth, politely entertained them, as, in nearby room, four beautiful women in long black flowing dresses played a late Haydn String Quartet. So Eulalia smiled, as the men sat sipping their milkless First-flush Darjeeling tea, and they - enchanted - soon forgot their questions, their disturbance of both thought and

mood. Thus did they take their leave, satisfied within themselves there was nothing amiss, and pleased to be invited to return, again. And thus did they, each alone, return, weeks later, to be treated as honoured guests: offered food, and drink, and a willing women to warm and share their bed. And thus did they leave, happy, replete, willing, cheerful, servants: useful, influential contacts, and sources of valuable information.

So the months passed, bringing the warmth and brightness of Spring to the land outside. And thus was there a new house, elsewhere, and far, with new burgeoning life within, and other woman, and guardians, to keep, nurture and protect it. And thus were there in that place new contacts invited, enticed. New fuel, of little value as fuel, to add to proper fuel for new boilers that kept such houses warm, in Winter, and provided the warmth of warm water for luscious women to bathe, and preen and wash. Thus were there new nexions, gradually opening, spreading, preening, sowing, feeding, growing.

^^^

There was a long moment of silence as Eulalia sat alone on the slight slope of that almost South facing hill among the mamelons of South Shropshire not far from where an ancient trackway marked the ancient border with the land of Wales. She felt both relieved and tired. Relieved that she had achieved what was necessary, but tired from the many decades of her wait. She had new sisters, and brothers, now - and her hopeless search, of years, to find others of her kind seemed just a distant no longer sadful memory. Thus did she smile, before rising to her feet to walk along the old footpath down to her house where her new guests would be waiting to be entertained.

Anton Long

Order of Nine Angles - 119 Year of Fayen

A DARK TRILOGY

Three short stories of sinister magick, esoterically related, which - like the Deofel Quintet - are entertaining instructional texts for those following the dark quest which is the ONA. The style of these stories follows that of the Deofel Quintet: "While the form chosen is fictional, it is not of a 'conventional' novel. Instead a new vehicle was created with the aim of combining a fast (and thus entertaining) pace with a narrative style that not only required the imaginative participation of the reader, but also sought to involve their unconscious. Thus, detailed descriptions - of, for instance, characters and locations - are for the most part omitted. It is left to the reader to supply such 'missing details': partly from their imagination and partly unconsciously, form their own expectations and 'projections'....."

Nythra

Kthunae

Atazoth

A Sinister Concerto in Three Brief Movements

by

Anton Long

114yf

NYTHRA

1

Lars smiled. The bullet had done its work, and his victim - his third opfer in as many months - toppled over backwards by the force of the impact, lay on the dark green late Spring grass, eyes open, limbs akimbo, and quite dead.

His vantage point had been the old Quince tree on one side of the ornamental lawn of the large Edwardian house, and he was soon back, past the wrought iron railings, on the pavement and walking under the bright May sunshine toward where he had parked his motorcycle, the wide ring road a few streets away making his escape from the town quite easy. Less than three hours later he was back in his own city, in his own modern, small, if expensive, Apartment overlooking the river. The smallness, the uncluttered clean newness, the view of the river, all pleased him, and, opening a bottle of Chablis, he raised his glass and gave his customary toast: "To presencing the Dark."

For Lars - not quite twenty-three years of age, of medium if muscular build and with a mane of not quite curly almost long chestnut-coloured hair - was entering the second year of his dark, sinister, quest.

Months ago he had shed the once obligatory black clothes for stylish wear obtained through his new hobby of credit card cloning, just as he had exchanged the room he shared in a rented house with friends for his pleasing Apartment, and just as he had given up his dreary city office job. It was meant to be new start, after his successful completion of the Rite of External Adept, and it was. Even his own sinister group had begun to flourish, and tonight, his dark gods willing, there would be a new woman for him to sexually initiate.

The small bookshelf near his plasma screen contained a large quartz crystal and only a few books, all of which dealt with his dark quest, and he sat in his comfortable chair - set to give the best view of the river - to read from his favourite book, a compilation of Satanic articles.

> "It is of fundamental importance - to evolution both individual and otherwise - that what is Dark, Sinister or Satanic is made real in a practical way, over and over again. That is, that what is dangerous, awesome, numinous, tragic, deadly, terrible, terrifying and beyond the power of ordinary mortals, laws or governments to control is made manifest. In effect, non-Initiates (and even Initiates) need constantly reminding that such things still exist; they need constantly to be brought "face-to-face", and touched, with what is, or appears to be, inexplicable, uncontrollable, powerful and "evil". They need reminding of their own mortality - of the unforeseen, inexplicable "powers of Fate", of the powerful force of "Nature".
>
> If this means killing, wars, suffering, sacrifice, terror, disease. tragedy and disruption, then such things must be - for it is one of the duties of a Satanic Initiate to so presence the dark, and prepare the way for, or initiate, the change and evolution which always result from such things. Such things as these must be, and always will be, because the majority of people are or will remain, inert and sub-human unless changed. The majority is - and always will be until it evolves to become something else - raw material to be used, moulded, cut-away and shaped to create what must be. There is no such thing as an innocent person because everyone who exists is part of the whole, the change, the evolution, the presencing of life itself, which is beyond them, and their life only has meaning through the change, development and evolution of life. Their importance is what they can become, or what can be achieved through their death, their tragedy, their living - their importance does not lie in their individual happiness or their individual desires or whatever."

Slowly, as Lars read, drank his wine, listened to his favourite modern music, twilight descended as it does in England, bringing a strange aethereal beauty to the river and the mutely lit buildings on the opposite bank, and he lay down his book to begin to plan his next deed. For there grew in him even then a desire for something beyond the clean almost emotionless efficiency of his killings, and he stood, outside, on his small balcony, glass of wine in hand, wondering what he might do.

His assignation with his sinister group was still some hours away and he spent one of those hours walking along by the river in the warmth of the early evening, half hoping that someone, or some gang, would attack him, for he had yet to try out the swordstick umbrella he carried. But all the people he passed seemed happy or absorbed in their own affairs, and he returned to the large, new, building that housed his own Apartment still considering what his new plan of action might be. Maybe it was this which made him err. Or maybe it was something else.

There was music in the room of a type he had not heard before, and he was scrutinizing the pile of CD's which lay beside the player when a female voice surprised him.

"It's Schubert's Piano Trio in E-flat."

She did not seem concerned to find a man in her Apartment, and stood, by the door to her bedroom, slightly smiling, her long auburn hair trailing over her shoulders, her nipples straining against the thin fabric of her revealing purple dress.

In control again, Lars said, "Beautiful."

"Yes, what a tragedy he died so young."

He was referring to both the music and the woman. "I believe I'm in the wrong Apartment." He guessed her age to be early thirties, and it was his turn to smile.

"Surreal."

"What?"

"This."

"I must be on the wrong floor."

"You are. You're right at the top, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"Better view?" She gestured toward her window and balcony.

"A little. Would you like to see?"

"Yes."

She was on his balcony, intently gazing across the river, and he stood so close to her their shoulders were touching. His dark quest had given him a confidence with women that his previous years lacked, and he allowed his hand to briefly touch hers as he turned and said: "Would you like some wine?"

"Yes," she smiled and followed him back inside.

He noticed her interest in his small pieces of electronic equipment, resting on the glass table he used as a desk. But she surprised him again by knowing what they were. "Cloning. Interesting," she said as she took the glass of wine he offered.

"It's just a hobby," he said and tried to hide his smile behind his glass as he drank.

"And one which can be quite useful. To interesting hobbies!" She raised her glass.

"To interesting hobbies!"

"You have a contact, I presume, who supplies some useful and necessary details."

For a few moments he looked at her suspiciously. Jared, one of the members of his sinister group, had indeed proved quite useful, employed as he was in an hotel. "Well..." he began to say in reply, trying to make some reasonable answer or excuse.

"Don't worry!" And she came toward him and touched his arm. "I've been looking for someone like you."

For a second he found her confidence, her attitude, her interest perplexing, but it was only a second. She was waiting, and he knew she was and he did not disappoint, taking the glass from her hand and placing both his and hers on the glass table. She did not resist his embrace: instead, she welcomed it, pressing her body into his and embracing him with a strength which surprised him. Then they were kissing, tongue to tongue, and removing each other's clothes.

Soon, they were on the floor, her dress pushed up around her shoulders, his shirt undone, his trousers and underwear removed. She was naked under her dress, and their sexual passion was intense. And when they were satiated, they sat, stretched out on the floor leaning against his sofa, drinking wine.

"You must have some interesting friends," she said.

"Not as interesting as you," he quipped, then winced at his use of a cliché. But before he could make some clever riposte in compensation, she spoke.

"You enjoy it, then?" she asked, "the game?" And she gestured toward his electronic equipment.

Her perspicacity amazed him and as he looked into her azure-coloured eyes he felt a brief contraction in his stomach as if she had reached out to him on another, darker, level. "Yes! Care to join the game?" He said the words quite without thought, instinctively, his face flushed with excitement.

"I would love too!" she replied, and kissed him. "When can we start?"

"Now?"

"Excellent! Anything in particular in mind?"

"Well, there is this meeting, tonight."

The Temple of his sinister group was a large converted room of a large house in Lars' chosen city, and it followed the precepts laid down in the Black Book of Satan as did the ritual of Initiation. Unusually, Lars did not participate, but sat with Arleen, his new lover, on cushions to one side of the altar, and as the ritual progressed Lars knew Arleen was unimpressed. So was Lars, despite the dramatic rendering of the ritual, and for the first time it occurred to him that such theatrical games had served their purpose and belonged to his past. He must quest forth into new realms, new sinister experiences.

It was many hours past midnight and Lars and Arleen left to stand for a while, in the garden of the house, in the still warm air of the night.

"You found it boring, then?" Lars asked.

"Yes."

"It lacked that vivifying ecstasy - that excitement, that danger - we need and crave."

"Most certainly."

"It's still early."

"My thoughts exactly!"

She stood smiling at him, and her presence, her eyes, the memory of their passionate, sexual, encounter earlier that evening, affected him in a reckless way. "I've got an idea," he said, satanically.

"This one," she said with an air of knowledge.

She had broken into, and started, the car parked in some nameless city street, in only a few minutes. "A youth, well-spent," she smiled as he looked at her quizzically.

Their target was several miles away in the sodium-lit darkness - an all-night garage on the edge of the city - where they, both dressed all in black, stopped, away from prying surveillance cameras, to assume their disguise of demon masks which Lars had borrowed from one of the members of his sinister group. There were no other customers, a tribute perhaps to the lateness of the hour, and Lars brandished his revolver while the thin, gaunt, and male keeper of the till with the face and clothes of a student, went even more pale. Lithe, Arleen vaulted over the counter, pushed him aside and took what cash there was. Less than a minute later, their first deed was done.

The money was irrelevant. It was the sheer excitement that roused them, that captivated, exhilarated, and after they had abandoned the stolen vehicle they sat in her powerful, sleek, car, laughing. Then they kissed, passionately, before she speedily, recklessly, sped them back to his Apartment and a night of physical passion.

2

It was only the beginning. For some reason Lars did not understand, but did not then bother about, he and Arleen not only inspired each other in a sinister way, but also complimented each other. He knew little about her beyond the few unimportant things she said about her past and present circumstances, but the truth was he was not that interested. What mattered for him was that he found her company vivifying. He felt stronger, more confident, more Satanic, as he knew she did. Quite without expecting to, or even wanting to, it seemed to him that he had found his perfect sinister partner, and he felt that with her he might Presence the Dark in exhilarating practical ways, bringing dark magick to the Earth in a manner far beyond the mundane rituals, and cullings, he had previously used.

They spent the morning of that cloudy, rainful day, in his Apartment planning their next deed. Once, after they broken bread and drank wine, she browsed through his small collection of Satanic literature, all of which emanated from the Order of Nine Angles and all of which did not seem to interest her.

Taking down one of the books, he read for her his favourite quotation, and, after he had finished, she smiled and said: "That certainly expresses the essence. We two are

more than mortal, for we are ready by our combined will and life-force and through our deeds to forge the next link in our evolution to inspire those who will admire us."

It did not seem a pompous thing for her to say given the circumstances, for Lars knew then with perfect clarity that she understood and it seemed to him for one indefinite, although brief, moment that she was darkness come alive.

"We might even become infamous," she added as a coda to his thoughts.

Now that, thought Lars, would be good. With this, his conversion was complete, and he showed her, locked away in aluminium cases and hidden behind a false back to his wardrobe, his small collection of guns, collected and bought from his sinister friends and contacts over the past two years. She said nothing, but the way she touched them pleased him.

Their planning completed, they left in her car to purchase the few items, and extra clothing, they needed, returning only to change into their new black outfits and affect a minimalist, but reasonably effective, disguise. They kissed passionately before setting forth into the typical rain of typical English middle afternoon.

An hour, and one stolen car later, they arrived at their destination: a Building Society in a fairly prosperous suburb. Three customers of indeterminate personality, and several staff, were inside. From his bag, Lars produced a shotgun, firing into the ceiling. One stocky middle-aged man, in a checked shirt and jeans, rushed toward Lars as a hero might, and Arleen drew the pistol Lars had given her, and shot the man dead.

"Money!" Arleen demanded to the terrified woman clerk nearest her, who duly if nervously obeyed, stuffing the small bag Arleen held out with a collection of banknotes.

Then they were gone, amid the sound of an alarm and a delayed, female, scream.

That night in Lars' Apartment - after a celebratory meal in an expensive restaurant paid for by Lars' hobby, and the customary toast to Presencing the Dark - their sexual passion and excitement attained new levels, binding them even closer together.

The morning sun found them tired, but joyous, and they lay together a long time in bed, drinking wine, touching, and talking of deeds they might - and should - do. Once, Lars left to return with one of his books, from which he read, and once they wandered to his sitting area to watch the news on his plasma screen. Their deed was there, if only briefly reported, and both smiled when they heard their deed described: "...callous...cold-blooded..."

"Those people, at that ritual, would they dare to do what we have done?" she asked.

"Probably not."

"Then they are still in chains; held back by their own feebleness, their inertia."

"Probably."

"So, it's only a pose for them, is it?"

"Probably."

That day of dark joy, killing, exuberance and passion became the archetype for the next part of their life together. Their next plan took them away, to another city, and although their modus operandi was almost the same, the dark intensity of their deeds increased.

This time, there was a long queue of non-descript people waiting patiently in the non-descript area marked out for such waiting, with the three non-descript serving staff of the chosen Bank seemingly secure behind their screens. The vestibule was large, if poorly lit by high modern lamps, and a non-descript kind of tribute to the time when the Victorian Bank building itself was a symbol for its times. Arleen and Lars, in their now customary black clothes and minimalist disguise - a wig, Egyptian style make-up for her; a flat tweed cap and a moustache for him - energetically entered the building, their guns ready. Arleen shot the last person in the queue - an elderly man - and gestured for the remainder to lie on the floor, which, obedient to her gun, they did as the body of the man lay bleeding and dying near her feet.

The cashiers swiftly handed over money, and it was all over in a minute with Arleen and Lars calming walking out of the building into the street where oblivious people, and traffic, passed. Over the road, and two side-streets later, they were back in their stolen car as, in the distance, a Police siren wailed above the city vehicle noise, lyingly proclaiming a kind of mastery of the streets.

Three days later, Lars and Arleen ventured forth again, to a city even more distant. The drab, dreary building was almost the same, and it seemed to Lars that he already existed on some higher level, taut, waiting, like some dark predator, ready to lunge, to kill. There was no queue, this time, on that dreary rainful morning in that dreary city of copycat shops and traffic - only one customer with a face like an artists' blank canvas, leaning against the counter while a young woman Bank clerk talked trivia to him, half-smiling. Lars pointed his gun, but it was Arleen who shot him, once while he stood, and twice after he had fallen to the floor. A young man pushed opened the

glass door as she did so, and he stood there, unmoving, his hand, knuckles-white, still holding the handle of the door. Arleen turned, raised her gun, pouted a kiss at him, and the young man fled with memories, a face, to haunt his dreams for years to come. Then she was smiling, waiving at the surveillance camera while Lars collected money.

Once outside, several people stood watching them - uncertain what was going on or what they should do - but Lars and Arleen walked calmly away not even bothering, this time, to hide their guns. They had not gone far along the street with its passing traffic when a Police car skidded to a halt.

"Armed Police!" a Police Officer shouted as he swiftly in a trained and masterly fashion exited the car, brandished his gun while using the open car door as a shield. "Put down your weapons!"

Lars turned and in an even more masterly fashion shot the man in the centre of his forehead. Around them, people ran, cowered, sheltered behind anything they could, astonished, afraid, amazed. The other Police Officer, about to aim, was forced to move away from his position beside the bonnet of the car as Arleen fired three times in his direction before brazenly walking around the back of the vehicle toward him as he crouched on the pavement that stood in front of a row of drab High-Street style retail shops. It might have been a scene from some film - except the dead body of the Policeman, the terror, the astonishment, of the people, were real. For a brief moment the Police Officer and Arleen looked at each other, weapons raised, and it was this look that doomed him. He could have fired at his closing target. Instead, he stayed crouching, looking into her eyes, looking at her smiling face, until the first of her two bullets impacted - one in his head, the other in his chest - when he tumbled awkwardly backwards yet sideways before the stillness of death overcame him. The rain had stopped as she had walked toward him, and a small swathe of bright, warm, sunlight came to relieve the scene of its repetitive city-drab greyness.

Lars gestured toward Arleen, who understood immediately and she fastly, recklessly, drove them away from the scene in the Police car which, a few minutes later, they had abandoned in favour of another hijacked vehicle.

Hours later, back in their lair, the television news had pleased them - "...cold-blooded.....ruthless..." but Lars sensed Arleen was restless as they sat on his sofa, having toasted their latest triumph.

"If what you say - or rather, what those books of yours say - is true," Arleen said, after Lars had read another extract from his book, Grimoire of the Dark Gods, "why don't we just bring these entities who can cause chaos, disruption, back to Earth? Wouldn't that be fun! Watch all the morons scurry about in their terror."

Lars smiled, and continued to read aloud. "I quote: The Dark Gods are means to self-fulfillment, self-understanding and self-divinity.....According to Sinister tradition, it is possible to "open a nexion to the Dark Gods" by certain sinister rites. Some of these rites involve such things as esoteric chant (for which see Naos) combined with a large, clear, pure quartz tetrahedron, while others involve ceremonies of blasphemy, excess and human sacrifice." He paused to look at her. "We would need a sacrifice, or two."

"Or three!" she laughed. "We should really change our tactics - keep one step ahead. I know, why not a bomb?"

"Or two."

"Why stop at two?"

"One small technical problem."

"You don't know how," she said.

"You guessed it."

"Can't be that difficult. Are we above mere mortals, or what?"

"I suppose the Internet would be a good place to start."

A meal, a bottle of wine, and several hours later, they had their answers. "All we need now are the materials, and ingredients."

A week later, they had their materials. Two days later, they had their bombs. They had slept little, and had ventured forth into the real world only to purchase or acquire the materials, the food, the wine, they needed. Their hours were spent studying the texts - the manuals they had acquired via the Internet - talking of deeds they might do, and satiating their sexual desire for each other. Those nine days had affected them both, although in different ways. Lars looked older, and somewhat tired, while with every passing day Arleen seemed to become more passionate, more energetic, more needful of physical passion.

Their city targets were chosen quite at random - a Bank, a street of shops, an Inn - and they left their deadly explosive devices, packed with long nails, in three stolen cars, with their timers set one hour apart. Lars and Arleen were not disappointed by the chaos, the death, the terror, they caused, and they sat avividly watching the television reports of the explosions in Lars' Apartment, smiling, and making toasts

with their glasses of wine to strange-named Dark Gods as the toll of their sacrificial victims rose: Shugara, Azanigin, Gaubni..

Lars was visualizing their victims - past and present - exulting in his deeds, and imagining the life of their lives seeping into, seeding, the large quartz tetrahedron he held in his hand. Arleen was beside him, pressing her warm thinly clothed body into his, and it seemed to him then that her nearness, her warmth, her very presence, not only strengthened him, overcoming his tiredness, but also seeped somehow into the crystal, warming it and his hand.

That night they ventured forth into the darkness of the rural English countryside, traveling hour upon tedious hour until they reached their destination. Lars had been there, already, in the first keen months of his dark quest, and he was not disappointed as they left their car in the lane by The Marsh to walk in the almost full moonlight to the top of Corndon Hill, for it was there that their simple ritual began.

Arleen held the crystal and he chanted his first chant: Nythra kthunae Atazoth. She lay down then, naked, still holding the crystal, and he stood over her, chanting his second chant: Binan ath ga wath am. He lay with her then, naked body to naked body, while a cool breeze came to dry a little of his sweat as he moved upon her. Was there really a change in the light? Or was it just the intensity of his visualization? Was there really something there, seeping through the nexion of their ritual, their crystal, their visualization, coagulated by the blood they had shed, and their own, cold, sinister, desire?

She was reaching her climax and as she did so her shout became a dark exultation: Aperiatur terra, et germinet Chaos. Then, there was stillness.

3

He had been a little ahead of her as they descended the hill, clothed, and happy, and he had to will himself to stop from laughing, loudly, raucously, for in the moment of her climax he had sensed the worlds, the beings, the dimensions, beyond. So little; so puny - we are..... He wanted to run, to jump - to shout, scream, to share, the truth, and he was nearing the bottom of the hill when he turned around. But she was gone, nowhere to be seen.

Calmly at first, he walked back toward the top, as - calmly - he walked back down again. He waited, then, a long time, before returning to the top. He waited even longer by the car; in the car, even as Dawn arrived to bring the warmth of the Sun to dispel the chill of the last hours of that night. Once, twice, in the bright morning light of that warm morning he ascended that hill; wandered around it, and it was only many hours later that he willed himself to leave, wondering, hoping, she would be there on his return, having played a lover's jape.

But she was not there, in his Apartment, and he found himself - surprised by his nervousness - knocking on her door, several Apartment floors below. There was no response to his insistent rapping. Her door was unlocked, as he half excepted, and he stood inside the completely bare, empty, spaces, not knowing what to think, and drained of all feeling.

The days, the weeks, past, grave-worm slowly, and even the news of chaos spreading across his planet did not please him, at first.

KTHUNAE

It was dark. Not the usual dark of a rural English night atop some isolated, tree-free hill, but an intense dark that made Jared unable to see even a few feet in front of him, and he could not help but be nervous. His Black Pilgrimage was not going that well and he had to finally admit to himself that he was lost. His brown hair - like his out-of-place urban clothes and shoes, and even his face - was covered in drying mud.

At least the night was mild, and he bumbled on as best he could for a few minutes in the hope of reaching the top of the hill. It should have been Black Rhadley Hill, but he had lost both his map and torch in the tumble caused by falling over something, somewhere, some time ago. It seemed like hours since he had passed through that dense copse of his fall but it was only thirty minutes. Thirty minutes which had seen him stumble into a stream, trip over twice, and stand still at least seven times in the hope of hearing something, anything, which might give him some indication of which direction to go.

Then, he really was at the top of the hill, able once again to see the stars in the sky, and make out dim shapes ahead and beyond. There was even a faint yellowish glow on the distant horizon which he took to be Shrewsbury town, and, pleased that the strange darkness had gone, he sat down on the damp grass. He thought - but only for a moment - about Lars and his sudden disappearance, for there was a faint light, down toward one side of the hill and he set off, hoping it was a Farm or a cottage.

It was neither. Instead, and nearer than he thought, it was a butane lamp, and it stood on the edge of a field beside a small tent. Jared waited by the old wooden field gate for a long time, watching, listening. But all he could hear was the slight breeze in the nearby trees, and all he could see was a young woman sitting outside the tent, reading, oblivious to the many moths that swirled around the lamp. Her long blonde hair was plaited in a single plait - a style Jared had assumed was long out of fashion.

Then, obviously aware of his presence, she turned toward him as he lurked in the shadows and said a friendly "Hello!"

Awkwardly, Jared climbed over the gate. "Hi."

"Lovely night," she said, as if they had met many times before.

"Yes."

"Traveled far?" She smiled, and something about her - maybe her round, cheerful face - made him feel quite calm and relaxed in her presence, and he sat down on the grass near her tent.

"Not really." For some reason she seemed familiar, and it was several seconds before he realized where he had seen a young woman, with hair like hers, and with a youthful, lively face like hers. It was a photograph in a book about National Socialist Germany and it showed members of the BDM. She was about the same age as the young woman in the photograph as well, perhaps between eighteen and twenty years old, and thus seven or so years younger than him.

"Be Dawn, soon," the young woman said, and put down her book.

"I suppose so." He tried to see what the book was, and failed.

"I'm Hester, by the way."

"Jared."

"You not camping, then?"

"Just out for a walk. I got lost."

"Easy to do, round here. Bit off the beaten track. Would you like some tea?"

"Well - " he began.

"It's no trouble, really." From the covered porch of her tent she extracted a camping stove, two small aluminium camping kettles, and two mugs. "This one, " she said holding out one of the kettles, "is my teapot!"

Jared was impressed, and while she waited for the water to boil she chatted, as a friend might, about the weather, the old man she had met yesterday who gave her permission to camp in his field, her trip, last month, to Germany, and by the time the tea was prepared, and drunk, Jared was quite content - more than content - to just sit and listen. Occasionally, he would say a few words, but mostly he smiled while she chatted and the light of lamp faded as its fuel was expended. But it did not matter, for the Dawn, opportunistically it seemed, replaced it. And with the light of Dawn he realized that not only was the young woman dressed all in olive-green, but also that her rucksack and tent were olive-green. She seemed like she belonged to a distant, more, gentle past, with her walking breeks, and her woolen shirt, although the shirt emphasized, rather than detracted from, her fulsome breasts.

"Time to get ready," she suddenly said, "it's a long walk back to catch my train."

"You heading for Church Stretton, then?" he asked as she stood up to begin to pack away her gear.

"Yes."

"So am I," he lied, desirous of her company. Suddenly, his Black Pilgrimage did not seem important.

"London?" she asked.

"Yes," he said, surprised. "How did you know?"

"Just a guess," she smiled.

"And you?"

"Oxford."

It did not take her long to pack and - after another mug of tea - Jared, trying to be gallant, offered to carry her rucksack. Her acceptance of his offer pleased him - for

the first two miles. After that, he was struggling, and tried not to show it as they walked paths and country lanes through the beautiful rural landscape and under the pleasant warm Sun of early June. He was glad when she suggested they stop by the foot of the Long Mynd for yet another brew of tea. But, after that, his torment got much worse, for the road up to the flat plateau of the heather-covered Mynd was steep, his feet were blistered and the rucksack straps had rubbed part of his shoulders raw. But he managed to keep smiling as they trundled on and she talked of her studies, her college in Oxford, her dreams of traveling around the world. Several cars passed them as they descended down the steepness that was the Burway with its glorious views of South Shropshire: the old hill fort of Caer Caradoc; the prehistoric remains of a volcano known as The Lawley; the ancient settlement and earth circle - as old as Stonehenge - atop Bodbury Hill.

The small town of Stretton was busy, with both people and cars, and Jared was wonderfully relieved when, after many hours of walking, they reached the Railway Station. The one bench - over the open footbridge - was occupied by three young men in modern casual clothing drinking from cans of beers, and such was Jared's tiredness that he sat on the platform leaning against the fence while the young woman stood beside him.

"The train won't be long," she said to him. "Are you changing at Hereford, too?"

"Yes." The three young men were staring at the young woman, and then at him, and he turned away. Her could hear the men talking among themselves, although he could not make out the words, but their laughter, their looks directed at the young woman, made him nervous, so nervous that when their train arrived, he suggested he and Hester go to the front of the train.

"No. I'm sure this will be alright," she said.

Jared was not surprised when the men followed, and sat in seats three rows behind, but he was surprised when - over an half an hour into the journey - Hester excused herself, saying she needed to go to the lavatory. Jared felt he should escort her, but he was trembling, his mouth was dry, and all he could say was, "OK."

She smiled at him, and left. The three men got up and followed and as they passed where he sat Jared made a half-hearted attempt to rise from his seat, but the look from one of the men was enough to dissuade him, and he slunk back into his heat, staring out of the window. But after less than two minutes, he could bear it no longer and - still trembling - he got up.

Whatever he expected, it was not the scene that greeted him in the narrow corridor that housed the train's small lavatory between the vestibules of its two carriages. The three men lay on the dirty, stained, floor of the corridor, slumped in various postures of unconsciousness, with Hester standing near them.

"Drunk too much beer, I suppose," she said, with a charming and disarming smile. "This is our stop, I believe." As the train slowed, she collected her heavy rucksack, and it was a somewhat dazed Jared who followed her out of the train onto the platform of Hereford Station.

They spent their short wait sitting on a wooden bench on the Station platform while Jared answered Hester's questions about his interests and past. Not that he was forthcoming about his involvement with the dark path he had chosen to follow over a year ago. Instead, he spoke then and on their shared train journey of his interest in computing, and regaled her for most of the time about that subject. For him, the time of that journey past quickly, and she was preparing to take her leave as the train approached Oxford when he blurted out: "Can I see you again?"

"Would you like to?" she smiled.

"Yes!"

Quickly, he wrote his address and telephone number on a page torn from her notebook, and sadly watched her descend from the train and walk toward the Station exit, hoping that she would turn round and look at him. She did, and smiled, and this image of her lasted until his own journey of another hour was over.

The city days passed slowly for him after that, and even his return to his work as a Night Porter in a small central London hotel did not please him, and he was thinking of her on that wyrdfull night when a young man with a pierced nose and lip walked to the hotel reception desk, and, brandishing a gun, demanded money.

"There is no money here," Jared said, his voice trembling.

"Then down on your knees, or I'll kill you!"

Jared did as the man said, and by the time he had the courage to move and creep to look over the top of the desk, the man was gone. Relieved, he was surprised when his own mobile telephone rang.

"Hello?" In his haste and nervousness he almost dropped his telephone.

"Jared? It's Hester. Can you meet me?"

"Of course!" Suddenly, his world did not look so bleak.

She named a place - not far - and a time - half an hour, and it only took Jared an instant to forsake his job for the pleasure a meeting with her would afford. The meeting place was a street corner of shops and offices, and only a few cars passed in the humid heat of the sodium-lit city night as he waited. Then, nearly half an hour beyond the appointed time, a black taxi cab stopped. Hester opened the door for him and he had hardly stepped inside when her skillful blow rendered him unconscious.

Jared awoke to find himself seated in and strapped to a chair in a large vaulted cellar, lit by subdued bluish light, although a few feet in front of him a perfect circle of bright white light had been projected onto the stone floor. Faintly, as if from an adjoining room, he could hear what sounded to him like Arabic music. Several people were present in the cellar, but the subdued light made them indistinct, mere shadows.

"Let this Sunedrion begin," a male voice said. There was something familiar about the voice, and Jared was trying to recall where he had heard it before when the shock of seeing Hester walk into the circle of light erased all his thoughts.

Barefoot, she was dressed only in a long purple robe fastened in two places in such a way that most of her breasts and her pubic hair were exposed. Her long blonde hair had been loosely tied at the back of her head by a purple band so that many strands of hair fell around her face and ears. This, combined with her red lipstick, her painted nails, her exotic perfume, overwhelmed Jared more than finding himself tied to a chair in some cellar.

"Do you accuse him?" the male voice said.

"Yes," Hester replied, "I accuse him."

"Proceed."

"I accuse him of cowardice in the face of the enemy. I accuse him of submitting to the decadent and the ignoble. I accuse him of betraying the dark quest he swore with an oath to undertake, whatever befell him."

"And if found guilty," the male voice said, "what penalty would you, our Mistress of Earth, impose?"

"Opfer!" she shouted with joy in her voice, and there was a faint hissing sibilation emanating from the indistinct shadows.

"Do you deny the charges?" the male voice demanded.

"What?" Jared said.

"Do you have anything to say in your defence?" the male voice asked.

It was then, only then, that Jared understood. "I failed the tests, didn't I?" he said to Hester.

"Yes!" Her smile was not one of kindness.

"Three?"

"Yes."

"So you admit," the male voice said, "the charges?"

"This is another test, right?" Jared said, trying to laugh.

"We await your answer."

"OK. So I failed. Big deal. I was wrong. It won't happen again. You've made your point."

"Opfer!" Hester shouted.

There was a faint hissing sibilation emanating from the indistinct shadows, after which the male voice spoke again. "It is decided. It is as you wish. He shall be your opfer."

"Agios O Baphomet!" Hester chanted.

"Agios O Baphomet!" came the sibilating reply.

"Wait - " Jared began to say, but two tall men with the gait, build, dress and looks of professional bouncers came to hold his arms while Hester untied him. Then, they forced him to his feet and she kissed him, briefly and on his lips, before the two men led him away.

He was taken to a large windowless room somewhere nearby and still underground, furnished only with a bed and lit with the same subdued bluish light. There was a metal door, the top of which was formed of a steel grille. Jared sat on the bed and waited. All he could hear was the faint music he had heard earlier, and all he could think of was that this was some new kind of test.

It was not long before Hester - accompanied by the two tall men - came to see him, although it seemed a long time to him.

"You have a choice," she said through the steel grille, still barefoot and still dressed in her robe. "We will give you a sporting chance, so you can freely go from this place, knowing that sometime, maybe soon, maybe not, we will seek you out and, one way or another, bring your causal life to an end as has been decreed. It could be weeks, months, a year; maybe more. Or - or, you could stay here, willingly, for seven days, during which time, for seven nights, I shall be yours. You should know that it is my time to conceive, and that our child would be raised among us according to our ancient ways, as you yourself would be revered." She smiled, then. "I shall return, at Dawn, when you can tell me what you have decided."

He did not sleep, and the large gourmet meal, the fine wine, he had been given he left untouched. He had no idea of the time, and spent an hour or so pacing up and down between the walls of his cell, trying to work out what was going on. Of course, he smiled to himself, several times during the hours of that night - or what he assumed was the night - he would not really be an opfer. This was just another test. But what was the right thing to do? Pretend to accept his fate, and make love to the beautiful, sexy, Hester? Or opt to go, and possibly never see her again?

Then, with her guards, she was there, still clad in her robe, watching him. "Have you decided?" she asked.

"Yes. I'll stay."

She smiled, this time quite kindly. "Gather round, all you here." And there were indistinct shapes that seemed to haunt the shadowed spaces beyond Jared's cell. "Witness that he, named Jared, has agreed of his own free will to be our opfer. Thus shall I for seven nights be his bride before our deed of sacrifice is done."

She unfastened her robe and let it fall to the floor. One of her guards unlocked the door and she came toward him, naked, as a lover might, smiling, enticing. Jared did not see, not hear, the door being locked, as he did not see nor hear the guards move away to leave them alone in the blue, subdued, light.

Her passion of hours exhausted him, and she left him sleeping, dreaming, happy, content. He awoke alone to find fresh food, new wine, and he ate and drank, and

waited, dreaming, happy, content. Then she was with him again, soft, gentle, passionate, shouting in her ecstasy. Then as the hours quickly, slowly, passed, she was gone, and he ate and drank the gourmet food, the fine wine, and waited, happy, dreaming, content.

Soon, he had lost count of the days, the nights, and weary but pleased, waited as he had waited. But she did not arrive. He fell asleep, to be awakened by the guards who carried him out from his cell through a sinew of dark corridors to the dark chamber of his accusers. But there was a not quite elliptical altar there, swathed in reddish light, and an ellipse of indistinct robed figures hugging the shadowed darkness beyond that swathe of light. And there was music, the subdued strange music of his past seven days and nights.

Bound by leather thongs, he lay naked and helpless upon the altar, while, out of the darkness beyond, a beautiful Hester in a crimson robe approached him, holding a curved, sharp-bladed knife.

She circled around Jared, saying: "Before you - we were. After you - we shall be, again. Before us - They who are never named. After us - They will be, waiting."

Then she turned toward the shadows. "What is it that you seek?" she chanted.

"It is the protection and milk of your breasts that I seek, " a voice replied.

Hester, as Mistress of Earth, moved toward Jared, revealing her breasts, before laughing and moving out from the ellipse of reddish light toward the shadows.

"I put my kisses at your feet," a male voice said,

"And kneel before you who crushes
Your enemies and who washes
In a basin full of their blood.
I lift up my eyes to gaze
Upon your beauty of body:
You who are the daughter and a Gate
To our Dark Gods.
I lift up my voice to stand
Before you my sister
And offer my body so that
My mage's seed may feed
Your virgin flesh."

Hester laughed and her two guards raised her until she lay upon Jared. Then she was arousing him with her hand and he did not, could not, resist as she guided his erection into her warm, moist cleft.

"Kiss me," she said as she slowly moved upon him, " and I shall make you as an eagle to its prey.

Touch me and I shall make you

As a strong sword that severs

And stains my Earth with blood.

Taste me and I shall make you

As a seed of corn which grows

Toward the sun, and never dies.

Plough me and plant me

With your seed and I shall make you

As a Gate that opens to our gods!"

Then, as Jared's body spasmed in his ecstasy, she intoned the last part of the rite.

"So you have sown and from your seeding

Gifts may come if you obedient heed

These words I speak."

The guards came, then, to lift her from the altar, and she circled around Jared, before speaking to the shadows, beyond.

"I know you, my children, you are dark

Yet none of you is as dark

Or as deadly

As I.

I know you and the thoughts

Within all your hearts: yet

Not one of you is as hateful

Or as loving as I.

With a glance I can strike

You dead."

She smiled, and twirled around, three times. "No guilt shall bind you, no thought restrict! Feast then and enjoy the ecstasy of this life: but ever remember I am the wind that snatches your soul!"

Jared tried to turn to see her, but she swiftly slashed his neck with her knife, and it was not long before the fountain of his life, his spurting blood, ceased to flow.

"Agios O Baphomet!" Hester cried, in triumph. With bloodstained hands and face, she went to kiss every member of her Temple reserving her last, and most passionate kiss, for Lars.

"So it has been, so it is, and so shall it be again," she said, before leading Lars up, toward the light of day, leaving her guards to do their work of cleaning and disposal.

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ATAZOTH

"So, you came back to see this old man." Ellick smiled, and stroked his greying beard before leaning on his ash walking stick. He stood by the gate of the small field of pasture land on the slopes of the old hill. Below, the hedgeful land gradually leveled out until it met the sea, less than fifteen miles distant.

"I knew you would be back here," Hester said, and kissed him on the side of his face.

"Will he do?"

"Maybe. There's a long way to go."

"But he shows promise."

"Yes."

"I'm glad."

"As I am. It's been a long wait."

"But he can never know, from you, the complete truth."

"I know."

"One more corner until the angles of our nexion are complete," and he gestured with his stick toward where the Sun of early morning rose into the sky of blue.

"Shall I take the next one there?"

"Indeed."

"And the third, and last?"

"Where you met and enticed the first."

"But it won't really be the last, will it?"

"Only for this cycle; this nexion." He sighed, looking at her beauty, her youth. "How I envy you."

"I know." And she briefly, warmly, held his hand.

"You will live to see it all."

They stood for a long time, looking out toward the landscape of the levels that had seen much darkness and mystery, much joy and revelry, and as they stood, she rested her head on his shoulder, as a daughter might. Once, she remembered, there had been an island, there, before the straight, land-cut drains made and reclaimed the land.

"Will you see her, before the angles are complete?" he asked, interrupting the flow of her centuries of thought.

"Maybe. Do you think I should?"

"Perhaps not."

"But he will meet her again when we all meet for the closing of that angle?"

"Yes, and then he may understand. At least what it is necessary for him to understand." Then he smiled. "I hope you will choose better names, next time!"

They both sensed, and felt, the intrusion, long before the woman and her dog appeared on a footpath an hundred yards above the sloping field where lay several buried secrets.

"You should go, now," he said, regretfully.

She looked toward where her two guards waited, under the shade of the large, old, Oak tree. "Yes," she said, and briefly held his hand.

Then Ellick was walking away, breaking a part of the causal bond between them, and by the time he reached the field gate and the footpath beyond it, he appeared to be only what many people assumed him to be, an ageing if eccentric countryman.

"Good morning," he said as he passed the youngish woman and her Welsh Collie dog. The woman smiled, slightly suspicious, but his smile, his eyes, re-assured her, and she returned his greeting. But he was gone, into the trees that led to the Coombe, where he sat, on the sun-warmed grass, thinking about Hester and her sister.

Suddenly, Lars understood. It was partly time itself that magick changed, the slow, causal, time of the world, of mere mortals. The ecstasy, the passion, the triumph, the exhilaration - the true magick - which he had felt since Arleen and Hester burst upon his life, were emanations of the real time which existed in the acausal, an acausal where space as he and mortals knew it, did not exist. So it was he could be here, standing atop Bredon Hill in the falling darkness looking toward the Malvern Hills, and there in that house of cavernous cellars, south-west, on the edge of another sloping hill, while also being near Black Rhadley, completing the three-fold acausal link in this particular causal time and space. He just had to open the nexion to slip into the acausal dimensions where the Dark Gods lurked, waiting.

But there was something else, something beyond even this, which he could not quite comprehend - an intimation of something far greater, far more powerful, far more evolutionary and devastating to the mundane world. But this something was insubstantial for him, in that moment, as a shadow vaguely perceived in semi-darkness.

Then, the insight was gone, as the last light of twilight faded, and Hester, with her two guards, joined him not that far from the summit of the hill. Without a word, she cast dark magick to reinforce the barriers around them, sufficient to make anyone venturing onto the hill in that hour instinctively turn away. The deep pit had been prepared, and their middle-aged and balding victim - chosen according to the guidelines for choosing such opfers - sat, bound and gagged, on the edge of his burial pit, his eyes bulging with terror, his once clean and expensive city suit crumpled and stained.

"This is your right, and duty," she said to Lars, and he took the centuries old curved knife. Then, with the crystal tetrahedron in her hands, she began her sinister chant. "Nythra Kthunae Atazoth," she intoned.

His first cut was not deep enough, and the man frothed blood until the second cut to his throat when he toppled over to briefly writhe in the bottom of the pit. Almost immediately, the two guards began to shovel earth over the still warm and bleeding body.

There were several hours to Dawn when they arrived, washed, refreshed, and changed into new clothes, to stop in a narrow hedgeful lane not that far from Black Rhadley. Ellick was there, dressed in his customary olive-green country clothes, standing in the field where Hester had, not that long ago, sat outside some tent; and there was a woman, standing with her back to Lars, near freshly disturbed soil. She turned to walk toward him, and he could clearly see her face in the star-lit country night. It was Arleen.

He stood, staring, while Hester rushed to embrace her. Then, the two women were kissing, passionately, as lovers might.

"This, here, as you know," Ellick was saying to Lars, distracting his attention from the women. "Is the center, now. You must guard it well."

"I will."

The two women came toward him then, and each kissed him in turn.

"You're going, aren't you?" he said.

"Yes," they replied with one voice.

"There is no child?"

"No," they smiled, replying with one voice. "Not the kind you think!"

"When shall I see you two again?" he asked, feeling he already knew the answer.

There was a brief rushing of air behind him, and he turned around. But he was alone, standing by the hedge in the field, near the fresh earth that covered the recent burial, home as that topsoil now was to the Ash sapling which Ellick had planted, and home as the deeper soil was to a fresh male and beheaded corpse, Arleen killed. And this sudden departure of Arleen, Hester - and even Ellick - saddened him, for a moment, even though he had many reasons to rejoice. Forty, fifty, or more, years from now, who would he choose to follow him, as Ellick had chosen? Who would be tested, as Arleen had tested him? Who would know the joy, the ecstasy, the passion, the cold calmness of wyrd, the aethereal acausal beauty, that a true Mistress of Earth would bring? Who would be there to shape the changes as he would shape the evolutionary change that the dark rituals of the past months would most certainly bring?

Then he smiled, knowing that he would have to begin a search for some woman, of inner darkness, to share his deeds and his life, and knowing that around him strange, shadowy shapes were faintly hissing their sinister sibilations.

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